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Our Changing Literary Temper

EDWARD WAGENKNECHT¹

During the sublime decade of the Nineteen-Twenties the air was full of scriptorial genius; nor had America before this time produced any writer whom the sophisticated could take seriously. In the absence of competition one could not avoid contracting eternal fame.—BRANCH CABELL, *Smire* (1937).

I

TWENTY-FIVE years ago, America seemed to be entering upon a major literary revival. Many inhabitants of the Middle West will always find it difficult not to date that revival from the great Book Fair held at Marshall Field and Company in 1920. There we picked up Hugh Walpole's pamphlet on James Branch Cabell and Burton Rascoe's on H. L. Mencken—I afterward sold mine for \$6.50—and there many of us first became importantly aware of the exciting new "Borzoi Books," with their strange, unfinished binding cloths, stained tops, bright yellow jackets, and general air of European sophistication. I do not recall that anyone had told us there was a revolt on against the "Genteel Tradition," but we knew that something was happening; and we were not sure that it ought to interest us as much as it did!

Who were the characteristic writers of the twenties? In whom was the "scrip-

torial genius" of the period embodied? I shall attempt no comprehensive list. But let me name, in poetry: Robert Frost, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Carl Sandburg, Vachel Lindsay, Edgar Lee Masters, Amy Lowell, and Edna St. Vincent Millay; in the drama: Eugene O'Neill; in criticism and biography: H. L. Mencken, Gamaliel Bradford, and Van Wyck Brooks; in fiction: Theodore Dreiser, Sinclair Lewis, Sherwood Anderson, Ernest Hemingway, Willa Cather, James Branch Cabell, Joseph Hergesheimer, and Carl Van Vechten.

One is not saying, of course, that all these writers were the "products" of the twenties; certainly, one is not attempting to regard them as a "school." (They were not, for example, all rebels.) And there were other figures, like Ellen Glasgow, certainly quite as distinguished, who produced throughout the decade and who were, in some cases, as widely read. Yet the writers I have named here were all, I think, representative; the "feel" of the period is, first of all, in them.

How much is left of them and of their influence today?

¹ Associate professor of English, Illinois Institute of Technology; author, *Cavalcade of the English Novel*, etc.; coeditor, *The College Survey of English Literature*.

Of the poets, Miss Lowell, Robinson, and Lindsay are dead. That should not be held against them; so is Shakespeare. But Miss Lowell has certainly come to impress us in retrospect more as a publicity expert than as a poet—it is significant that no collected edition of her poems has ever been published—while Lindsay has shrunk to a very small body of verse, which, however, seems likely to be with us for some time. Robinson's reputation is probably still very much where it was; how much he may be read, I am not sure. Masters added little to his stature after *Spoon River*; Sandburg, despite absorption in history, journalism, and propaganda, has fared better, though he is less important than he was. Miss Millay's pose of college-girl sophistication is less attractive—and even, alas! less shocking—in her fifties than it was in her twenties; but her skill in the somewhat limited field of her mastery is as great as ever, and the sweet young things of the forties probably still like her poems almost as well as the *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. In short, only Robert Frost, among the poets, has consolidated and strengthened his position; he alone may face the future with complete confidence.

Eugene O'Neill's long silence has somewhat lessened interest in his work. He is known to have been engaged upon ambitious projects, and there is still room for hope that when he shall choose to reveal them, he may reoccupy the old heights.

H. L. Mencken, *l'enfant terrible* of the twenties, now votes the Republican ticket. Like other village atheists, Mr. Mencken, though less exuberant than of old, still shows a tendency to pour out the baby with the bath, but there is no longer any excuse for failing to perceive his adherence, on one side, to the American tradition. The political developments

of the thirties, which displeased Mr. Mencken, delighted Mr. Van Wyck Brooks; his object in life once was to find out what was wrong with all American literature, but today he sings a contented purr in its praise; where he once dismissed even Mark Twain and Henry James with a wave of the hand, he now finds merit not only in Washington Irving but even in N. P. Willis! Gamaliel Bradford's influence upon the art of biography has not yet spent itself in the second decade after his death, though apparently only the present writer has cared to use his psychographic method; chronology still keeps its stranglehold upon most biographers.

It is the novelists, however, who really pose the problem, and it is in connection with their work that our changing literary temper may really be observed. Poetry, of course, has committed suicide; and our dramatic desert, despite all the hopeful signs of our youth, is again as arid as it was in the nineteenth century. But in fiction a very different situation prevails.

The novelists of the twenties have, by now, endured every variety of fate.

The intervals between Miss Cather's books grow longer and longer; it is clear that she has nearly shot her bolt. But, except for fanatics like Granville Hicks, her glory is untarnished; her position in contemporary fiction is, I should say, not dissimilar to that of Frost in our poetry. Of Hemingway it is difficult to speak dogmatically. An accomplished artist who cannot think, he seemed, a few years ago, to be slipping badly; *For Whom the Bell Tolls* brought promise of new developments; it is too early to say whether or not that promise will be fulfilled. Anderson went off badly before his death; Van Vechten, a minor figure who caught the time-spirit of the twenties on its naughti-

er side, now devotes himself to photography. There is still considerable vitality in at least the earlier Lewis. Of Hergesheimer and Cabell I shall speak later. Theodore Dreiser has published no novel since *An American Tragedy*; his last collection of short stories appeared in 1929. Worse, all his major works are now out of print; indeed, the forties knows him widely as fictionist only as the author of the film, *My Gal Sal*.

II

The fiction of the twenties was not all of a piece; it would be difficult, for example, to find two writers who must seem to have less in common than Dreiser, with his tender, clumsy, vast, formless, powerfully written stories about some of the less exhilarating aspects of the American scene, and James Branch Cabell, with the iridescent, shimmering tapestried beauty of his synthetic utopia, Poictesme.

Yet both writers shared the rebellious mood of the twenties—it is hard to say which was the more anti-Puritan—and it is not without significance that, despite his detestation of naturalism, Cabell should have been able to “perceive some merit” in Dreiser when he came to evaluate his contemporaries in *Some of Us*. Today, they share another thing—the neglect of the forties. And Hergesheimer shares it with them.

The decline in Mr. Cabell's vogue is not hard to understand. He is a comparatively difficult writer; he indulges his idiosyncrasies and perversities to an extent which only a special clientele could well be expected to enjoy; he demands more erudition, as well as more imagination, from his readers than most readers possess. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that even in the twenties, Mr. Cabell's special eminence was, to a

certain extent, a “made” thing. In his own words, Mr. Cabell devoted eighteen years “to failing at authorship, until prudence gave . . . [him] a leg up from out of oblivion. . . .” He had started promisingly enough, during our George Barr McCutcheon period—both Mark Twain and Theodore Roosevelt were among his early admirers—but the turn toward realism left him stranded; and his books sold a few hundred copies each until, in 1919, *Jurgen* had the extreme good fortune to be frowned upon by the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice.

The attack came at a time when Americans were much less accustomed to being pushed around than they are today; and every liberal in the country—they were not yet “totalitarian liberals” then—rallied to Mr. Cabell's banner. What was the use of trying to create an American literature if a masterpiece like *Jurgen* could meet such a fate?

The resultant excitement enabled Mr. Cabell to write many new books, to revise his old ones and bring them back into circulation, and finally to fit all his work into place in the definitive Storisende Edition of the *Biography of the Life of Manuel*, which was completed in 1930, a perfect capstone for the vanished twenties.

The strangest thing about the whole comedy is that the champions were right: *Jurgen* is every bit as good a book as they believed it to be. But the devotion of many of its readers was a devotion without roots; they “adored” Mr. Cabell for the wrong reasons, not because they understood what he was doing but because he happened to be “the thing.” So it is not too surprising that twenty-odd years after the ban on his masterpiece has been lifted, there should not be enough people who want to read it to

keep it in print. Mr. Cabell, in short, seems fated to end his career as he began it, the darling of a limited group.

Why Dreiser has declined I am not sure. It would be encouraging to believe that his notorious shortcomings in literary graces have brought about his fall; but as I contemplate some of our best-selling, 800-page "historical" novels, I am doubtful of that. His brand of materialistic naturalism has, unquestionably, less standing now than it had when he was in his prime; and that is all to the good. It may be also that there is some prejudice against Dreiser, as there is against Mencken, for his failure to perceive that the enlightened political leadership of our time has brought us to the threshold of the millennium. But these considerations alone would hardly seem to explain his collapse.

The case of Joseph Hergesheimer is at once clearer and more complicated and, I think, more enlightening. Hergesheimer was, in a sense, a follower of Cabell's, but he made terms with his environment as Cabell never did; it was not for nothing that the *Saturday Evening Post* paid him more than \$500,000 in the course of his career. Like Cabell, he took up his stand, nevertheless, at the ivory tower; the novelist, he insisted, had no social or moral obligations; it was enough if he created beauty.

Let us see how this worked out in his own career. As a writer, Hergesheimer divided his attention between the present and the past. His reputation was made with his third novel, *The Three Black Pennys* (1917), which tells the story of one hundred and fifty years in the life of one family, against the background of the iron industry in Pennsylvania. He returned to the method of this book, at the end of his career, in *The Foolscap Rose*, where paper replaces steel,

and, with modifications, in *The Limestone Tree*. In these books and in the short pieces collected in *Quiet Cities* we get Hergesheimer's feeling for the past at its best; he tells us not merely how our ancestors dressed and what kind of houses they inhabited but how they thought and felt. The list is completed, on the historical side, by *Java Head*, *The Bright Shawl*, and *Balisand*. *Java Head* gives us the Port of Salem during President Polk's administration, when a soulless, conscienceless commercialism (the opium trade) was encroaching upon the romantic, the heroic, the lovely past. *The Bright Shawl* is a vivid picture of Cuba in her days of bondage and of an idealistic young American who tried to deliver her. *Balisand* is a more ambitious but less entertaining book, the portrait of a Virginia Federalist of the post-Revolutionary period.

The first important novel in a contemporary setting was *Linda Condon* (1919). But this rather Freudian study of soulless beauty does not strike Hergesheimer's characteristic "modern" note. That note is sounded first in *Cytherea*, a study of dissatisfaction in a middle-aged, married man, overcome by the desire to seize, before it shall be too late, the erotic experience he has somehow missed in life, to merge with the Cytherea who is at once a vampire-doll and the goddess of his dreams. Hergesheimer returned to the theme of *Cytherea* in *The Party Dress*, in which the problem is studied from the woman's point of view. Other pictures of drunkenness and infidelity among wealthy Americans will be found in the short stories, *Tropical Winter*, and in the novel, *Tampico*.

Comparing the novels of the present with the novels of the past, it is not difficult to see that Hergesheimer does not like the age in which his lot has been

cast; he records its infidelities, but without approving of them; he cannot rid himself of the notion that values were lost somehow with a simpler, less sophisticated America. Yet his love for this older America is, in a sense, a sentimental love, for he has no real anchors in the past. He clings tenaciously, as he himself once pointed out, only to its more superficial aspects; its faith is gone, but he still remembers "the hour of its supper" and "its amazing breakfasts." Unfortunately, a man cannot fend off a welter of materialism with even the finest and rarest of antiques; neither is Duncan Phyfe one of the names given among men whereby we must be saved.

Hergesheimer disliked, in short, the "literary pathology," the "arrogant materialism" of his time, but he did not like the things the libertarians were attacking much better; his anti-Puritanism, his negative reaction to his doubtless narrow religious upbringing delivered him over to the very forces that were destroying the things he loved. In *The Three Black Pennys* he could still perceive, as artist at least, that adultery must entail consequences, but in the modern novels the anchor has been cut away and the good ship is drifting. Now the novel, unlike music, is inevitably a study of human conduct; somewhere there must be a criterion, a norm; considering the matter on aesthetic grounds alone, this novelist's notion of the moral irresponsibility of the novelist does not seem to have worked out too well.

This deep-seated dichotomy, typical of the more sensitive emancipates of his time and leading at last, inevitably, to frustration, was the thing which aborted Mr. Hergesheimer's career; and the abortion has, I think, more than a personal significance. By 1926 he was already "damned sick" of art; in 1934, not yet

halfway through his fifties, he published his last novel.

III

What, now, of the writers of fiction who have emerged or developed importantly since the twenties?

Again I attempt no comprehensive list. But mention should be made of Pearl Buck, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, Stephen Vincent Benét, Mary Ellen Chase, Rachel Field, John Dos Passos, John Steinbeck, Josephine Johnson, and Thornton Wilder.

There is even less homogeneity here than in my earlier list. But placing these writers over against the others, what do we find?

First, an intense social consciousness. The indifferentism of Cabell and Hergesheimer is gone. Their feeling of superiority is gone. The modern novelist feels a keen responsibility for the underprivileged, for the nation, and for the world.

Second, there is a note of affirmation in contemporary fiction. The pessimism and futilitarianism of the twenties is gone. I do not mean that our novelists have returned to the bondage of dogma. The type of mind which Mark Twain used to call "Presbyterian" would be as much shocked by them as by the men of the twenties themselves—perhaps, indeed, more so; for they accept, as a matter of course, many of the things which the twenties struggled for with intense self-consciousness. But, unlike his predecessors in more comfortable times, the contemporary writer believes in man, and he has hope for the future.

Third, there is a new determination to get the whole experience of humanity into fiction. The men of the twenties accepted that principle, but they often interpreted it to mean merely that fiction

must be widened in the direction of taking in man's animal impulses. No doubt it was necessary that that extension should be made. But today we are traveling in other directions also. Contemporary fictionists do not fear the supernatural, for example; they make a clean break with the realistic method whenever their subject seems to demand such a break. But they know also that the spiritual life of man does not exist solely in terms of supernaturalism.

It was one of the special gifts of a writer who appeared midway through the twenties but whose spirit belongs to a later period, Elizabeth Madox Roberts, that she realized all this and made her readers understand it. But it should be added that there were other writers who began much earlier and who are seldom mentioned in connection with the renaissance of the twenties, who understood it quite as well. Mary Austin, Mary Johnston, and Zona Gale were all committed to the creation of what one of them, Zona Gale, once described as "the allotrope of the novel."

Along with these tendencies has come another, perhaps less important, which has been quite in harmony with it—the renaissance of interest in the historical novel, especially in the novel which explores America's past. J. Donald Adams² and others have already pointed out that, unlike most of the historical novels of the 1900's, our characteristic current experiments in this genre are not novels of escape. They take us back to the rock whence we were hewn. Through contact with the past, we seek to renew our faith in the embattled present and in the future.

It will be clear, then, that I feel the force of Mr. Adams' description of the

²*The Shape of Books To Come* (Viking Press, 1944).

new note of affirmation in contemporary literature. But there is another side to the scutcheon. There is, I think, an element of danger in our contemporary fashion of affirmation which Mr. Adams does not glance at.

Mr. Adams himself, to be sure, takes his stand on the broad, general ground of faith in life and in human nature; others, Mr. MacLeish, for example, do not stop there; like the Marxians, they demand allegiance to a party or to a cause. I am by no means so sure as Mr. Adams seems to be that, in falling in with the mood of the hour, the writers of the forties are going to serve humanity better, in the long run, than the men of the twenties did with all their hard-boiled skepticism. (The critical spirit is, after all, a very valuable thing; and, with all its limitations, it still provides excellent insurance against being "taken in.") And I am by no means sure that when the history of the years leading up to Pearl Harbor comes finally to be written we shall have no need of a new Julien Benda to give us a fresh *Le Trahison des clercs*, based upon American materials.³

The step from "co-operation" to regimentation is sometimes a very short one. When, for example, Mr. Lewis Mumford, writing in the *Saturday Review of Literature*, for December 2, 1944, outrageously and absurdly impugns the moral integrity of Professor and Mrs. Charles A. Beard, for no better reason than that they differ from him and from the forces now in control of the American government in their interpretation of the sig-

³ Benda's book was published in Paris in 1927. Richard Aldington translated it into English as *The Great Betrayal*; the American publisher called it *The Treason of the Intellectuals* (Morrow, 1928). See also Herbert Read, *Julien Benda and the New Humanism* ("University of Washington Chapbooks," No. 37, edited by Glenn Hughes [Seattle: University Book Store, 1930]).

nificance of our recent history, he nominates himself for a high post in the American *Gestapo*, when it shall finally be established. For it is, I take it, the first qualification of a successful persecutor that he should be honestly convinced that any man who differs from him, and from the government, is a bad man, for whom no punishment could be too severe.

I think it may also be said that there is considerable danger that our contemporary emphasis may have a tendency to exalt the second- or third-rate writer and to depress the giant. It is not often nowadays that a novel "makes" the front page of an important reviewing medium because it is considered valuable as a work of art. "Significant" novels get the lion's share of the reviewers' attention. And they are "significant" precisely as a new book on public affairs may be adjudged significant, because they reflect the dominant thought-currents of the present hour.

Now it is one of the important differences between the small writer and the great one that the small writer has been molded by and unthinkingly reflects the life of his time, while the great writer takes a comparatively independent course of development. It is not his business to "solve" our problems for us; no important writer has ever done that. There is far more to be learned about Elizabethan temporalities from a dozen third- or fourth-rate Elizabethans than there is from Shakespeare; indeed, I think *The Merry Wives of Windsor* was Shakespeare's only play in a contemporary English setting. Incidentally, it is also the only one which is said to have been written by royal command.

I am not saying that the great writer must always, like Goethe, cultivate an Olympian detachment in the face of

world calamities; he may, on the contrary, be as much involved in them as Thomas Mann. But Goethe's detachment was right for Goethe and for Goethe's genius; and only through such detachment could Goethe have fulfilled his genius and his obligation. Milton, who was very differently constituted, found it impossible to live that way; but Milton's contribution to the permanent heritage of mankind would have been much greater had he not put aside the ambitions of his youth and sacrificed his eyesight to perform his political duty, as he conceived it, by writing pamphlets in which he described Cromwell's opponents as "boar in the vineyard" and "snout in the pickle."

I have already spoken in these pages of Mr. Hergesheimer and of Mr. Cabell. Mr. Hergesheimer has, in a sense, been the author of his own decline, as I have shown. Mr. Cabell's development, on the other hand, has, I think, been complete and symmetrical; though he has shocked many more people than Mr. Hergesheimer, he has attained an inner certitude which has eluded his friend. He has, to be sure, his limitations; there are many excellent things which he cannot do; but that is beside the point. His own Smire has impudently summed up the contemporary case against him: ". . . Poictesme . . . is pastiche; Poictesme is old hat: Poictesme is sophomoric; and moreover—so they tell me—Poictesme is pseudo this, and pseudo that, and quite probably pseudo the other. There is no class struggle in Poictesme."

This article is not a plea for Mr. Cabell: I cite him merely as an example of the kind of writer we shall have to sacrifice if we commit ourselves to the view that literature must hereafter be "programmed." I know that he is not for all markets; I know, too, that the mere fact

that a man has created the most elaborate work of fiction in American literature, that his major opus alone runs to some eighteen volumes, embracing an exhilarating survey of several aspects of the spiritual life of mankind, in the story of Dom Manuel and his descendants, in Poictesme, England, and America, between A.D. 1234 and 1927, and doing all this in terms of a particular idiom which is James Branch Cabell and nobody else on earth—I know that all this does not suffice to prove that Mr. Cabell is a great writer. But when we become indifferent to the question of whether or not Mr. Cabell is a great writer simply because he prefers Manuel's Poictesme to Roosevelt's America and when we stop reading him not because of his shortcomings but because he does not illustrate the dominant interests of the hour or because he is an aristocrat in "the century of the common [alas! too, too common!] man," then it is time to be gravely concerned.

As Lord David Cecil never tires of pointing out, the range of a creative writer consists of that portion of his experience which can be fertilized by his imagination. A writer does not choose this range; it is chosen for him. Sometimes, as with Tolstoy, it is very wide; sometimes, as with Jane Austen, it is comparatively narrow. But for an artist to attempt to write outside his range, as Mrs. Gaskell did in the military portion of *Sylvia's Lovers*, or Scott in *Count Robert of Paris*, or Willa Cather in the second half of *One of Ours*, is to court inevitable disaster.

If a writer finds his creative inspiration in the economic struggle—or in the Second World War—by all means let him write about these things. But to tell the writer that he *must* use such subjects is to betray an astonishing ignorance of the workings of the creative mind; creativeness is not to be had upon such terms. It is a fortunate thing when wholesomeness and decency are combined with artistic sensitiveness, as they were in Browning, as they were in Dickens and in Scott; but that does not mean that Gene Stratton-Porter is a better writer than Oscar Wilde, or Lloyd Douglas than Baudelaire. The great religious literature of the world was not created to satisfy a demand or to fit in with the needs of a national "program"; it came into being because artistically creative men found their creativeness released by their religion. And it is not only in religion that "the wind bloweth where it listeth"; the same thing is true in art. The writers of the American literary revival of the 1920's were wrong about many things, but about one thing they were everlastingly right; they knew that art has an absolute, not a relative, claim upon the attention of mankind; they were willing to accept it for its own sake; they did not think it necessary to camouflage it as something else. "The content and the 'importance' of a work of art," said Henry James, "are . . . wholly dependent on its *being* one: outside of which all prate of its representative character, its meaning and its bearing, its morality and humanity is an impudent thing."

A Second Look at "Bartleby"

EGBERT S. OLIVER¹

HERMAN MELVILLE'S "Bartleby" has received little attention from the Melville critics or commentators, even though it stands as one of the two examples of his writing for 1853, the year following the writing and publication of *Pierre*, and at the beginning of his period of lesser prose writing before his long silence. Its position relative to his other work, if no other reason suffices, should assure it some attention, and it has not been entirely overlooked. In fact, a greater unanimity regarding it prevails among those Melville commentators who have mentioned it than on any of his major works. Two conclusions have several times been drawn regarding it, substantially in the same way: (1) that it is a good story and (2) that it is a picture of Melville's mind, both at the time the story was published and indicating what his attitude was to become.

John Freeman, the English biographer of Melville, asserted that, while the other stories in *The Piazza Tales* are comparatively insignificant, two of them, "Bartleby" and "Benito Cereno," are superb. "Bartleby," he wrote, "is an exercise in unrelieved pathos, the pathos of an exile in city life, faint counterpart of Melville's own isolation and gathering silence." Raymond Weaver, to whom admirers of Melville will be forever indebted for his competent critical and biographical work, reserves his highest praise of *The Piazza Tales* for "Benito Cereno" and "The Encantadas." But he does recognize the importance and value

of this volume of stories in gaining a view of Melville as an artist: "They are of prime importance, not only for their inherent qualities as works of art, but because of the very peculiar position they hold in Melville's development both as an artist and as a man." Weaver included "Bartleby" in the volume *Shorter Novels of Herman Melville*, which he edited with a very fine Introduction. "And for twenty years," Weaver wrote, in the course of a biographical comment, "morning and evening, between 26th Street and the foot of Gansevoort Street, East River, an inconspicuous and elderly private citizen—a man whose history had been partly told and partly foreshadowed in *Bartleby the Scrivener*—walked with his own private thoughts."

Lewis Mumford, in his biography, saw in even more detail the mirrored view of Melville's mind in Bartleby's withdrawal from life.

Mumford wrote:

Bartleby is a good story in itself: it also affords us a glimpse of Melville's own drift of mind in this miserable year: the point of the story plainly indicates Melville's present dilemma. People would admit him to their circle and give him bread and employment only if he would abandon his inner purpose: to this his answer was—I would prefer not to.

This latter clause is Bartleby's answer, frequently repeated. Mumford supposes that Melville's persistence in minding his own spiritual affairs alienated those who could help him, made them impatient,

for in the end, they foresaw they would be obliged to throw him off, and he would find

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himself in prison, not in the visible prison for restraining criminals, but in the pervasive prison of dull routine and meaningless activity. When that happened there would be no use assuring him that he lived in a kindly world of blue sky and green grass. "I know where I am!" Whether or not Melville consciously projected his own intuition of his fate, there is no doubt in my mind [this is Mumford's statement] that, as early as 1853, he was already formulating his answer. To those kind, pragmatic friends and relatives who suggested that he go into business and make a good living, or at least write the sort of books that the public would read—it amounts to pretty much the same thing—he kept on giving one stereotyped and monotonous answer: I would prefer not to. The dead-wall reverie would end in a resolution as blank and forbidding as the wall that faced him: a bleak face, a tight wounded mouth, the little blue eyes more dim, remote, and obstinate than ever: I would prefer not to!

"Bartleby" is the story of a man who gradually withdrew within himself, cutting off, one by one, the bonds of human fellowship and association until he stood alone, completely—blank and silent. His attitude toward life was a gradually progressive nonviolent nonco-operation—even while he attached himself as a parasite to his employer and benevolent guardian. (This, the reader must be assured, is an inadequate and unfriendly summing-up of "Bartleby," which will be modified before this essay is finished.) I should like to suggest that the germ of the character Bartleby came not from Melville's searchings of his own relationship to society or from any bitterness in his hardening heart but from an external contemporary source, namely, Thoreau's withdrawal from society.

Melville, so far as I know, does not mention Thoreau directly by name in any of his writing, whether his literary work, letters, or various journal jottings. He mentions Emerson several times; he reviewed Cooper for the magazines; he has some comment to make on Dana,

Irving, and many minor writers. He, of course, has much comment on Hawthorne, with whom he was closely associated for a year and a half, and the various writers of the Duyckinck circle. However, his omission of Thoreau's name—while he was naming other writers—did not mean that he was ignoring Thoreau.

In 1850 Melville borrowed Thoreau's *Merrimack* from Evert Duyckinck's private library. He had ample opportunity to know much about Thoreau. His interest in Emerson in 1849 might have prompted him to ask Duyckinck for Thoreau's *Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*. His friendship with the Hawthornes in the Berkshires in 1850 and 1851 certainly gave him occasion to hear of the various Concord characters. Hawthorne was for a time strongly attracted toward Thoreau. He greatly admired his workmanship and his skill in handling a small boat. Thoreau was, as Hawthorne tells us in his *Notebooks*, an occasional guest of the Hawthornes and a companion of Nathaniel in field and stream. Mrs. Hawthorne and her sister, Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, showed great interest in the American writers, especially in the Concord writers.

Hawthorne lived in Concord during the time of Thoreau's residence in the cabin by Walden Pond, his so-called hermitage, and Thoreau's experiment in withdrawing from society was probably discussed between the Melvilles and Hawthornes on occasion or on many occasions during their period of close relationship. However, even supposing that no one who knew Thoreau ever expressed an opinion of him to Melville—a most unlikely supposition—still Melville had ample opportunity to get the basis for his "Bartleby" from the so-called hermit of Walden Pond. He had available to

him a published source which he used both in general outline and in some detail.

In 1849 Sophia Peabody Hawthorne's sister, a prominent member of the Transcendentalist group, Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, edited a book called *Aesthetic Papers*. This volume, which Melville undoubtedly had a chance to see in the Hawthorne home² if he did not himself have a copy of it, contained one of Hawthorne's longer historical tales, "Main-Street," Emerson's essay, "War," and an essay by Thoreau, "Resistance to Civil Government." This essay, now generally known as "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience," is known to all readers of Thoreau and is considered to have influenced Gandhi's activities in South Africa and India. It also served as a basis for Bartleby, who long preceded Gandhi in passive nonco-operation.

Thoreau argues that the American government—the government of slavery, engaged in the Mexican War unjustly—was such that a man "cannot without disgrace be associated with it. I cannot for an instant recognize that political organization as *my* government which is the *slave's* government also." Why do not people who want the Union dissolved, he asks, "dissolve it themselves—the union between themselves and the State?" "The proper place to-day, the only place which Massachusetts has provided for her freer and less desponding spirits, is in her prisons, to be put out and locked out of the State by her own act, as they have already put themselves out by their principles."

In this essay Thoreau tells the story of his own withdrawal from organized

society and of his imprisonment for nonco-operation. "Pay, or be locked up in the jail," the state said. "I declined to pay." This is like Bartleby's often reiterated "I would prefer not to." Thoreau did not wish to pay a tax to aid in supporting the church. At the request of the selectmen, he gave them a formal statement:

"Know all men by these presents, that I, Henry Thoreau, do not wish to be regarded as a member of any incorporated society which I have not joined." This I gave to the town clerk; and he has it. The State, having thus learned that I did not wish to be regarded as a member of that church, has never made a like demand on me since. . . . If I had known how to name them, I should then have signed off in detail from all the societies which I never signed on to; but I did not know where to find a complete list.

Thoreau then tells of his night in jail for not paying his poll tax. Here are some passages which suggested much to Melville. Thoreau says with a defiance which Melville must have admired: "I was not born to be forced. I will breathe after my own fashion." Bartleby's associates, his neighbors, his jailors even, did not know what to make of him, and Thoreau had found the same reaction of bewilderment. "They plainly did not know how to treat me . . . for they thought that my chief desire was to stand the other side of that stone wall."

The kernel of Thoreau's thought is this: "It is for no particular item in the tax-bill that I refuse to pay it. I simply wish to refuse allegiance to the State, to withdraw and stand aloof from it effectually." This is the kind of challenge which intrigued Melville and set his mind to working out implications. Here is a man who lives in society, certainly to a real extent dependent upon it, yet withdrawing, aloof. Bartleby, when asked to join in co-operative tasks, replies, "I would

² The copy of *Aesthetic Papers* which I have in hand for this study, curiously enough, came from the library of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Melville's friend and neighbor in the Berkshires. It is owned by the V. L. Parrington branch of the University of Washington Library.

prefer not to." He gives no reasons. He simply wishes to refuse. Thoreau's advice is explicit. He is encouraging a withdrawal from life, even an attaching of one's self to others, as he had built his cabin on Emerson's land. "You must hire or squat somewhere, and raise but a small crop, and eat that soon. You must live within yourself, and depend upon yourself, always tucked up and ready for a start, and not have many affairs." This is just the kind of practice which makes of Bartleby's life a cipher, a zero: Squat somewhere, and live within yourself. "I can afford to refuse allegiance to Massachusetts," Thoreau boasts, "and her right to my property and life." Melville quietly writes a satire to show that one cannot afford such a boast: to squat somewhere and live within yourself is to refrain from living.

Bartleby in many ways, both outwardly and inwardly, parallels Thoreau. Bartleby was a scrivener, that is, a writer, a copyist. When once asked what he was doing, Thoreau replied, "Keeping a journal." He, too, was a scrivener, a writer. In fact, Melville was undoubtedly aware that Thoreau was generally accused of being a "copyist" himself, a copier of Emerson, as Lowell pictures him in *A Fable for Critics*. Melville may or may not ever have seen Thoreau, but his first brief glance at Bartleby and the comment it called forth might have been made by many observers on seeing Thoreau. Bartleby, "a motionless young man," stood at the door. "I can see that figure now—pallidly neat, pitiably respectable, incurably forlorn!"

Bartleby is installed as scrivener in the law office in a manner such as to leave him within call, yet out of sight of his employer. "And thus, in a manner, privacy and society were conjoined." Even as Thoreau was, while close to

Concord, yet isolated from it, out of sight behind the screen of green trees, so also Bartleby was installed in a hermitage behind a high green folding screen near his employer's desk. The new scrivener at first worked industriously: "As if long famishing for something to copy, he seemed to gorge himself on my documents. There was no pause for digestion. He ran a day and night line, copying by sun-light and by candle-light." Melville may well have remembered the myriad classical allusions, references, quotations in the *Week*. Probably he was aware of Thoreau's lack of humor and local reputation for aloofness when he said of Bartleby: "But he wrote on silently, palely, mechanically."

When Bartleby's copy is to be verified with the original, a type of work involving the joint labors of two or more men, Bartleby declines to help. "I would prefer not to," is his response. He is steadfast in his refusal. To the question "*Why* do you refuse?" he but answers, "I would prefer not to."

The three office clerks represent the variety of public opinion toward such a withdrawal from co-operative work. The employer appeals to them to support him in urging the adamant Bartleby to join in the work.

"Am I right?" he asks.

"With submission, sir," said Turkey, in his blandest tone, "I think you are."

"I think I should kick him out of the office," is Nippers' view.

"I think, sir, he's a little *luny*," replied Ginger Nut with a grin.

But Bartleby has his way. He does not choose to help verify copy. Others must do his work, the work which normally would be expected of him. Thoreau lived on Emerson's land by Walden Pond. He borrowed Alcott's ax. Someone else paid his tax to keep him out of prison. "In

fact," Thoreau wrote in his essay, "I quietly declare war with the State, after my fashion, though I will still make what use and get what advantage of her I can, as is usual in such cases."

Melville was so fond of good food, good drink, and good fellowship that the vagaries in Thoreau's diet offered themselves as subject for jest. Bartleby remained in his "hermitage," his little corner of the office, even at mealtime. He was in the office first in the morning and last at night. In fact, he—like the camel which thrust its nose in the tent—took up quarters in the office. If he were to make his withdrawal effective, it must depend on someone else. He did not go out for food. Food must be brought to him. Ginger Nut, the office boy, is regularly sent out to return with a bag of ginger nuts, a dry, hard cookie.

He lives, then, on ginger-nuts, thought I; never eats a dinner, properly speaking; he must be a vegetarian, then; but no; he never eats even vegetables, he eats nothing but ginger-nuts. My mind then ran on in reveries concerning the probable effects upon the human constitution of living entirely on ginger-nuts.

Bartleby's firm position, that of refusing to assist in verifying copy, is accepted by his employer with a tolerant ease. The eccentric scrivener was perfectly harmless in his passivity. Moreover, "it is plain he intends no insolence; his aspect sufficiently evinces that his eccentricities are involuntary." But the strange wilfulness of Bartleby expresses itself in additional ways. At first he will not verify copy—"I would prefer not to," is his way of putting it. Then he also would prefer not to go to the post office to look for mail. He refuses to do an errand even within the office. In fact, he declines to hold his finger on a string to aid in tying a knot.

Shall I acknowledge it? The conclusion of this whole business was, that it soon became a

fixed fact of my chambers, that a pale young scrivener, by the name of Bartleby, had a desk there; that he copied for me . . . ; but he was permanently exempt from examining the work done by him . . . ; moreover, said Bartleby was never, on any account, to be dispatched on the most trivial errand of any sort; and that even if entreated to take upon him such a matter, it was generally understood that he would "prefer not to"—in other words, that he would refuse point-blank.

He is progressively living within himself!

This is Melville's picture of the Thoreau he abstracted from "Resistance to Civil Government," probably embellished and enlarged by Melville's conversations with Nathaniel and Mrs. Hawthorne. Bartleby is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the convictions Thoreau expressed: "I declined to pay." ". . . I can afford to refuse allegiance. . . ." "I, Henry Thoreau, do not wish to be regarded as a member of any incorporated society which I have not joined." "I was not born to be forced. I will breathe after my own fashion." "It is for no particular item in the tax-bill that I refuse to pay it. I simply wish to refuse allegiance to the State, to withdraw and stand aloof from it effectually." Bartleby, too, simply wished to refuse. He stood aloof. He never gave reasons. He never argued. He embodied passive nonco-operation. He was a squatter, and he lived within himself.

Bartleby takes up quarters in the office—even his employer does not know when—spending his days and nights there, eating and sleeping there, attending to his personal toilet and laundry there. He takes over the offices, requesting the employer to come in only during working hours. But the employer-narrator of the story is not outraged by such usurpation. He is rather overwhelmed by the thought of Bartleby's loneliness, the solitude of his life.

Such an aspect of Thoreau's professed withdrawal from society and life alone in a cabin would have strongly impressed the companionable, sociable Melville. For he himself, too, was feeling the loneliness of the life at Arrowhead, away from the many friends he had enjoyed in New York. In 1850 and again in 1851 his New York friends had visited him. The Hawthornes had lived but a few miles away over the hills, and he had been meeting new friends. But in 1852 the Hawthornes were gone from the Berkshires; the Duyckincks and their circle of friends did not come again; Melville was feeling the loneliness of his new life. He had been feted in London, dined and entertained in New York, a popular author; but now even his neighbors were a little suspicious of him, and he was cut off from fellowship, by distance, by poverty, and by the feeling that his literary work was no longer given approval. It may well be that Melville's own sense of isolation entered into the employer's feeling toward Bartleby:

For the first time in my life a feeling of overpowering stinging melancholy seized me. Before, I had never experienced aught but a not unpleasant sadness. The bond of a common humanity now drew me irresistibly to gloom. A fraternal melancholy! For both I and Bartleby were sons of Adam. . . . What I saw that morning persuaded me that the scrivener was the victim of innate and incurable disorder. I might give alms to his body; but his body did not pain him; it was his soul that suffered, and his soul I could not reach.

With all kindness the employer attempts to establish a fellow-communion with Bartleby. But Bartleby prefers not to talk, to answer questions, to say anything of himself or his circumstances. He even decides to do no more writing: "I have given up copying," he says. Now, doing no work, he was completely a squatter in the office. More than that,

cut off from everyone, he was but a squatter in the universe, absolutely alone, "a bit of wreck in the mid-Atlantic."

Still he refuses to leave the office. Melville sees and enjoys the wry humor in such a situation. Bartleby is withdrawn from all social contacts, he is living within himself, but his very presence demonstrates the absurdity of his situation. Bartleby's employer contemplates the possibilities of an assumption on his own part. If Bartleby assumes that he has no relationships with or obligations to society, why not have society in turn assume that this assuming ex-scrivener did not exist? He thinks:

I might enter my office in a great hurry, and pretending not to see Bartleby at all, walk straight against him as if he were air. Such a proceeding would in a singular degree have the appearance of a home-thrust. It was hardly possible that Bartleby could withstand such an application of the doctrine of assumptions.

But he decides against such direct action, instead accosting Bartleby with some impatience.

"What earthly right have you to stay here? Do you pay any rent? Do you pay any taxes? Or is this property yours?"

He answered nothing.

"Are you ready to go on and write now? . . . In a word, will you do anything at all, to give a colouring to your refusal to depart the premises?"

He silently retired into his hermitage.

Thoreau, in speaking of his experience in Concord jail in "Resistance to Civil Government," mentions how his fellow-prisoner occupied one window while he looked out the other and concludes, "I saw that if one stayed there long, his principal business would be to look out the window." Bartleby does find in his self-imprisonment that he leaves himself nothing to do but look out the window, in his case, a window opening on

a blank wall. "I noticed," the employer observes, "that Bartleby did nothing but stand at his window in his dead-wall revery." Again: "Bartleby remained standing at his window in one of his profoundest dead-wall reveries."

Bartleby is established as a fixture in the office, as a piece of furniture, harmless, useless, silent. There the story reaches its extreme application, but for one turning. The employer was reconciled to Bartleby; the office workers were reconciled to him; he was accepted as a squatter and so might have continued. But the outside world, clients and visiting lawyers, did not understand Bartleby or the strange relationship—or lack of relationship—existing between him and the other people whose destiny it was to occupy the same bit of the world he inhabited. Other people, outsiders, made remarks. They thought the situation queer. The employer was becoming the subject of gossip.

"I resolved to gather all my faculties together, and forever rid me of this intolerable incubus." Go he must. But he would not go! "Since he will not quit me, I must quit him." However, even this stratagem is not enough to save him from the man of no obligation, the man who had withdrawn from everything. Bartleby remains in the emptied quarters. "You are responsible for the man you left there," the next tenant says accusingly to Bartleby's benefactor.

Bartleby—this man who would not feel the importance of human ties, who had cut himself off from all social contacts (so he foolishly imagined)—soon had the entire building, even the street, in a state of indignant excitement. Locked out of the offices, he persisted "in haunting the building generally, sitting upon the banisters of the stairs by day, and sleeping in the entry by night.

Everybody is concerned; clients are leaving the offices; some fears are entertained of a mob; something you must do, and that without delay." This urgent challenge is hurled at the former employer, who had hoped to rid himself of Bartleby. But organized society could not dispense with Bartleby as easily as Bartleby could dispense with society.

The logical absurdity of Bartleby's position is emphasized in one brief conversation—brief, yet so much the longest of Bartleby's remarks as to appear loquacious.

"What are you doing here, Bartleby?" said I.

"Sitting upon the banister," he mildly replied. . . .

"Would you like to re-engage in copying for someone?"

"No; I would prefer not to make any change."

"Would you like a clerkship in a dry-goods store?"

"There is too much confinement about that. . . . But I am not particular."

"Too much confinement," I cried. "Why, you keep yourself confined all the time!"

"I would prefer not to take a clerkship," he rejoined, as if to settle that little item at once.

Bartender? No. Collecting bills for a merchant? No. Travel to Europe as a companion? No, but I am not particular! "I like to be stationary."

Bartleby gets that privilege in jail. Even as Henry Thoreau went quietly to the Concord jail with Constable Sam Staples, so, too, did Bartleby.

As I afterward learned, the poor scrivener, when told that he must be conducted to the Tombs, offered not the slightest obstacle, but, in his pale, unmoving way, silently acquiesced.

Some of the compassionate and curious bystanders joined the party; and headed by one of the constables arm in arm with Bartleby, the silent procession filed its way through all the noise, and heat, and joy of the roaring thoroughfares at noon.

Melville's plan of telling the story of *Bartleby* does not permit him to contemplate the thoughts of that prison inmate, as Thoreau could reveal his own thoughts in like circumstance. But *Bartleby* is found by his benefactor "standing all alone in the quietest of the yards, his face toward a high wall," much as Thoreau "stood considering the walls of solid stone." Thoreau wrote: "They plainly did not know how to treat me, but behaved like persons who are underbred. In every threat and in every compliment there was a blunder; for they thought that my chief desire was to stand the other side of that stone wall." *Bartleby* might well have said—or thought—the same. Melville in narrative form presents the ill-timed compliment and the underbred commentator, the loquacious grubman.

Bartleby avoids every attempt to establish relationships with him. He moves away even from food and takes up a position "fronting the dead wall." This is the ultimate in his withdrawal: he ceases to eat and is soon at peace, asleep "with kings and counsellors."

Such is the end to the kind of individualism Thoreau portrayed in "Resistance to Civil Government"—the end carried to its logical and absurd conclusion. "I declined to pay," said Thoreau, "I was not born to be forced. I will breathe after my own fashion." "Depend upon yourself." When Thoreau declined to pay, someone else paid for him, as he acknowledges in the essay. Melville was attracted by paradox. He often wished to imagine an example worked out to its logical conclusion. He certainly admired some of the heroic stubbornness of Thoreau even as he is often very sympathetic with *Bartleby*. But that admiration does not prevent his seeing the absurdity of some of Tho-

reau's extreme pronouncements in this essay.

Thoreau wishes to choose what he will do and what he will not do. He prefers not to do some things. Let that "preferring not to" become progressively more extended. What then? Moreover, someone makes up for the deficiency. Who paid Thoreau's tax? On whose land did he live? Who acted as his benefactor?

In "*Bartleby*," Melville has a reference to the notorious New York murder where Colt killed Adams in a fit of imprudent resentment and anger. He then makes the application that even self-interest—if no better reason can be found—demands a charitable attitude. "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another." Even though Melville must have been intrigued by his character *Bartleby* and admired the self-sufficiency of the man, yet he shows us the implications of such an independent course of action. *Bartleby* became less and less a man until there was nothing left of him. There can be no such thing as an effective life of aloofness. When Thoreau wrote, "I simply wish to refuse allegiance to the State, to withdraw and stand aloof from it effectually," he was but expressing an absurdity.

Thoreau could write, as he did in his journal for January 16, 1852: "Here was one [Bill Wheeler] who went alone, did no work, and had no relatives that I knew of, was not ambitious that I could see, did not depend on the good opinion of men." If Melville had seen this sentence he would have asked, with a raised eyebrow or a sly wink: "No relatives? Not even a mother? Or a father? No work? On whose efforts does he depend, even if he does not depend on opinions?"

In April of that year before Melville was to write "*Bartleby*," Thoreau confided to his journal: "Society, man,

has no prize to offer me that can tempt me; not one. . . . When I am most myself and see the clearest, men are least to be seen. . . ." "Bartleby" seems to be written in answer to such thought as this. The pathos of "Bartleby" need not blind us to the implications of the story. Try as you will, you cannot cut yourself off from society, and to persist in such a direction can only destroy the individual.

It is possible that Melville, who enjoyed a pun almost as well as he enjoyed enigmas and puzzling allusions generally, may have had a sly reference to Thoreau's extended use of ancient and oriental literature in his suggestion that "Bartleby had been a subordinate clerk in the Dead Letter Office at Washington, from which he had been suddenly removed by a change in the administration."

Melville had ample opportunity to know a great deal about Henry Thoreau and his various experiments in individualism and in depending on himself. He

read some of Thoreau's writing: probably he read the three instalments of "A Yankee in Canada," which early in 1853 appeared in *Pulnam's Magazine*, the magazine in which "Bartleby" appeared in November of that year. In "Bartleby" he paid his respects to the kind of social attitude represented by Thoreau's two-year "hermitage" by Walden Pond, by his note of withdrawal from organized society, by his refusal to pay his taxes, by his acceptance of a situation in which he lived at the expense of another man, permitting another's paying of his taxes to keep him from jail. "Bartleby" indeed is interesting as a story. It is also interesting as a revelation of Melville's mind and method of writing during 1853. It is an important clue pointing toward Melville's wholesome sanity, his objective searching of social relationships, his active interest in his contemporaries and their writings. In "Bartleby" we see him looking outward, not in any spirit of despairing rebellion searching his own heart.

GLOSS FOR LINES BY A KING'S CHANCELLOR

SISTER MARY IMMACULATE, C.S.C.

*Trust shall I God to enter in a while
His haven of heaven, sure and uniform.*

—THOMAS MORE¹

*Trust shall I God, for kings betray
And Lady Luck eschews her serving-man.
Trust shall I God unto my ending day;
Persuade him to disdain me, he who can.*

*His haven of heaven to enter in a while—
For this my galley cleaves the fiercest sea;*

*The star that lights his port cannot beguile,
But turns all rage to best adversity.*

*His haven of heaven sure and uniform,
Nor false nor fitful harbor will I find;
Nor after calm need look I more for storm,
So full at rest the heart, the questing mind.*

¹ From a short ballet "made for his pastime while he was prisoner in the Tower of London."

The Function of Literature in a Democracy

FLOYD STOVALL¹

EVERY organization is the image of its creator; for when the mind creates, it infallibly reproduces itself. The quality of a social system cannot therefore be better than the quality of the people who create it. In a democracy, which is the creation of all the people by a process of compromise in which no individual will prevail, the standard of quality is the average man—that mythological being who exists nowhere but is an indispensable symbol in all calculations. Hence the only way to improve a democratic society is to improve the average man. He must be equipped with the intellectual and spiritual resources needed to guard the nation against the tyranny which unscrupulous demagogues will invariably set up over an ignorant or complacent citizenry. Wherever the average man is ignorant or base, democracy fails. If we could transform the average man into the ideal man, at once wise and simple, we should have an ideal democracy, that heaven on earth of which men dream. Though we cannot have that, the future is not hopeless. We shall never realize the ideal in a world of actualities, but there is no perceptible limit to the progress we can make toward it. The one condition without which progress is impossible is, precisely, belief in progress. Unless we hold to our faith in human nature and in the power of man to grow in the direction of his ideal, democracy is a farce and a delusion. The preservation of democracy consequently depends upon the

preservation of man's faith in himself as a spiritual and potentially godlike being.

How can this be done? Obviously, not by legislative enactment or judicial decrees. These may be among the effects of faith, but they are not the causes of it. It will perhaps be said that it is a question of religion and therefore within the province of the church. I agree that it is a question of religion, and I also agree that we may reasonably look to the church organizations for a part of our effort, perhaps the main part. Religion, the Christian religion in particular, has been an incalculable force in making social democracy possible, but it should not be left to carry the burden alone. This is a work for the whole people and for all their institutions, whether social, political, educational, artistic, or religious. But it is to literature especially that we must look for the support of religion in building up man's faith in himself.

From the earliest epochs of human history, literature has been the handmaiden of religion, and the most enduring literary monuments have been raised in that service. The Bible of Jewish and Christian worship is one of the noblest of such monuments, and the sacred literature of the Hindus is another. On these primitive literatures are based the two great religious systems which, with their derivatives, provide the spiritual ideals of most of the peoples of the earth, one system dominating the West and the other the East. If we add to these sacred literatures the Greek epic and dramatic writings, the moral teachings of the schools

¹ North Texas State Teachers College.

of Confucius and Socrates, and the myths of all races, we shall have a cultural heritage of unimaginable richness. But that is not all. Such great poets as Dante, Milton, Goethe, Wordsworth, and, in our own land, Walt Whitman are primarily religious and moral teachers. All great literature is life transformed by passion and art into lasting forms of beauty and truth, to which we may turn for reassurance in moments of discouragement. The great books of the world are reservoirs of truth, and as we read them the springs of faith are renewed within us.

One who feels that he is losing faith in the Christian religion turns to the reading of the Bible for reassurance. Suppose an American finds himself in danger of losing his faith in democracy. What should he read to restore it? Not the *Congressional Record*, surely, or the statutes of our national and state legislatures. He might well read the Constitution of the United States, but he would do better to choose the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson's First Inaugural Address, and Lincoln's memorable words spoken at Gettysburg. It would be better still if he would devote himself to the essays of Emerson and the poems of Whitman, which, taken together, might justly be called the "scriptures of American democracy." Through them and through such modern poets as Sandburg, Robinson, and Frost we can know the best that is in us and recognize in ourselves, however imperfect, the image of that ideal humanity which is the goal of all our aspiration.

Having faith, we can do what we will, but only if we work with an intelligent regard for the past. We must seek in experience the confirmation of our faith; and experience, which belongs to the past, survives for us as habits of thought and

feeling and as institutions. We can be loyal to these habits and institutions without yielding to them abjectly. To use the past effectively in shaping the future we must understand it. The history of the United States is the history of democracy in its modern phase. To understand democracy, therefore, we must study our own social organization as it is described in what we generally refer to as the "social sciences." Let our children be taught to know the economic and political processes of a democratic society and respect the responsibilities of a citizen. Let them read in our histories the factual account of the struggles through which our nation grew to maturity and of the role played in these struggles by our national heroes. In the contemplation of the great events of our past they may come to believe that equally great events will occur in our future. But history, as the term is here used, is but the record of life as it manifests itself actually through events and public relations. For a more intimate, personal, and emotional account of the past, for an ideal or spiritual history, we must turn to literature.

For literature is, in fact, a kind of history. It is history written with passion and imagination, transcending actuality. The historian rightly tells only what is known to have been said and done in the past, whereas the poet or novelist can reveal to us the most intimate thoughts, feelings, and dreams out of which the words and actions arose. The great literary artist sees reality amid appearance, the permanent within the flux of life, and what he tells us is no less true and valuable than what the historian tells us. Literature, taken as a whole, is the spiritual autobiography of the human race.

Let me illustrate by citing some well-known literary works. The Indians of

Cooper's romances may not be historically authentic. Are they therefore untrue? Not at all. Cooper magnifies what is noblest in all Indians, while that which is trivial and transitory he strips away. In this sense his Indians are idealized. In like manner Longfellow tells but a part of the story of the exile of the Acadians and does not agree in all points with the facts. Yet in *Evangeline* one feels a deeper spiritual truth than the facts reveal. People often refer to literature as the imitation of life, but it may be said with equal truth that life is the imitation of literature.

Man was a poet and creator long before he was a historian and recorder. The ancient world lives today chiefly through the myths which its poets created; and, though we have a few facts about that world, we have many truths, for myths are always true. A myth is true not to the letter, but to the spirit, of its age. In modern times myth-making is most common among backward peoples, such as the Africans or the American Indians before the white men came, but it is not so rare among more enlightened people as may be supposed. Washington and Lincoln exist in the minds of most Americans today as figures of myth. Only what was great and true in them has survived, and this has been magnified until the men have assumed heroic stature. In earlier times the same process frequently ended in the deification of heroes. There is nothing false in these godlike men, and only foolish cynics wish to "debunk" them. Sometimes the mythical hero is not any one person magnified, but a composite or purely ideal figure. Such is the cosmic hero of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, who was intended to be the ideal American. Many other literary heroes could be named, such as Cooper's Leatherstocking and Mark Twain's

Huckleberry Finn. The myth-making imagination is indeed the very essence of poetry, and it is most active among unliterary people, as in the "tall tale" of the West and Southwest. Paul Bunyan and Beowulf are spiritual cousins, though widely separated in time and space.

I have called literature a form of history. In a great book the ideal element in life is magnified and immortalized, so that it becomes both precept and example for later times. When such a book embodies the spirit of democracy, it becomes a powerful agent for the dissemination and growth of democratic ideas. It makes the past live in the present, and it safeguards man's heritage so that each generation is born richer because of the accumulated values of all the generations that precede it.

But literature is more than history; it is also prophecy in the true sense of the word. For a prophet, rightly defined, is one who speaks for another, especially one who speaks for a god. He is an interpreter, a sayer, a poet; and the god he speaks for is man in the ideal, or the god in man. He is a poet though he uses the language of prose, as did Isaiah, Plato, and Carlyle. He may foretell the course of future events, but that is not chiefly what makes him a prophet. In Tennyson's much-quoted poem "Locksley Hall" there are remarkable prophecies of things that came to pass nearly a hundred years after the poem was written; and in E. A. Robinson's last poem, *King Jasper*, published in 1935, events were forecast that are now occurring. But there is nothing supernatural in these foreshadowings of things to come. The prophetic gift is one of insight, the power to see the ideal and the permanent amid the actual and transient and to know that what truly lives, lives immortally,

changeless through perpetual change. The words of the poet-prophet become a bridge between the past and the future. They counteract the tendency of shallow minds to suffer disillusionment and grow pessimistic through failure. They stand against the shortsightedness and bigotry and demagoguery that are among the gravest dangers to democratic idealism. It is true that what passes for literature can be prostituted to the vices of a democratic society as well as to any other. I speak only of a robust literature that is buoyant and clean bodied. The truest prophet of American democracy is the poet Walt Whitman, who speaks for the god in man, confirms his dreams, and reveals to him the immortality of the spirit. There is encouragement in the fact that Whitman has grown steadily in the esteem of the American people from the first publication of *Leaves of Grass* in 1855 to the present time, when he is widely hailed as the greatest American poet and the authorized spokesman for American democracy.

I have spoken thus far of the function of literature in preserving democracy by affirmations of faith, by interpretations of the past, and by prophecy linking the past with the future. In all this we have been concerned with democracy within a single national unit, specifically the United States. But a democracy cannot isolate itself from the rest of the world. All men agree that the world of the future must perforce bring nations into closer and more complex relationships. In these relationships will be found the means to war or peace. Although there is no sure method of maintaining world peace, I venture to affirm, and I think few will deny, that with better understanding of one another the peoples of the world are more likely to live together in harmony. Nations get acquainted

through diplomatic intercourse and by means of travelers and tradesmen, but they can really know one another only by speaking the same language or, at least, by reading the same books. We know Europe better than Asia because our language and culture are derived from Europe. We know that we must study the languages and literatures of the other Americas in order to understand them, and the same is true in some degree of Russia and China. Our future peace and the success of our democratic experiment depend upon our ability and willingness to exchange ideas as well as commodities with the rest of the world. Literature is the natural medium for such an exchange.

Schools and colleges, newspapers, theaters, and other cultural agencies can promote international good will by encouraging the study of foreign languages and the reading in translation of the best literary productions of other countries. But they should make greater efforts to guide public taste so that the best books, not merely the most sensational, will be translated. If we read the worst books of a people, we shall discover the worst that is in them, and, not knowing that it is the worst, we shall misjudge them. We Americans have suffered in the estimation of the rest of the world because we are sometimes represented in translation by the worst rather than by the best of our spokesmen. Let our writers be genuinely American without being crude or spectacular; let them fix their roots in their native land and shun the affectation of cosmopolitanism, yet not fall into the narrow rut of provincialism. A great man grows out of a great nation as a tree grows from a rich soil. The United States is already a great nation in material strength, but in spiritual values its greatness is potential rather than actual.

A literature that is unaffectedly democratic, that reveals the best in us and leads us to believe in ourselves, will help tremendously in the realization of that potential greatness. When the soul of America shall have grown in greatness to

equal the body of America, the world will gladly sit at the feet of our prophets. When that time comes, but hardly before, we may hope to draw the nations into a brotherhood of peace and unity.

Some Unexpected Results of College Military Programs

RICHARD F. MILLER¹

THUS far in this war various branches of the armed forces have used hundreds of colleges and universities throughout the United States to train in an accelerated way hundreds of thousands of men and women in uniform. Most of these programs have now been discontinued, although there are a few still in progress. Because my experience in these programs has been in the past, I shall speak of them in that tense.

It is difficult for any civilian to appraise these programs thoroughly, but any civilian who has taught in the programs can see that they will influence postwar education. For example, to mention but one certain influence on teaching methods, I believe many teachers in these programs—I, for one—will never return completely to peacetime teaching practices in the classrooms. A good dose of horse sense administered by the military has had a healthful effect.

There have been, however, other more important results of these programs, and they are not necessarily related directly to possible changes in postwar teaching practices. As an English instructor of Air

Corps trainees and A.S.T.P. soldiers from March, 1943, to July, 1944, I became aware of mildly revolutionary trends—trends which have probably been noticeable in all college military programs.

An English teacher has one compensation in reading students' themes. He usually knows a group of students much more intimately than does an instructor in a department that uses the lecture method alone. From reading themes and from listening to speeches of several hundred soldiers at the State College of Washington, I concluded that, when these men were mustered out, they would, because of their college training, prove that the money invested in them—the money spent primarily to train them to fight a highly technical war—would bear interest in the postwar world in an unexpected way.

One patent result of the programs is that the soldiers who were in them are going to be more nationalistic in the postwar world than previous veterans, but their nationalism is not going to be a mere flag-waving type. Second, these men will be more appreciative of what the democratic way of life means in actual practice. Finally, I believe that

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these men realistically and aggressively will be determined to prevent the occurrence of future wars in their lifetimes.

One of the first discoveries made by a soldier, a sailor, a marine, is that everybody he meets in the service speaks the same language—good old American. Private Ross from the South does not pronounce all words exactly as Private Kaplan from Brooklyn does, but they both understand each other perfectly. They even know the same jokes and songs. This uniformity of speech tends to draw these men closer together. They realize, perhaps for the first time, that there is such an entity as a nation of the United States; the section of this land they had called America has suddenly become a nation. One of the first steps in the growth of a spirit of nationalism is that the people become aware of the beauty, vigor, and elasticity of their mother-tongue. Russia, Germany, and England—to mention merely three large countries—experienced this awareness. On the other hand, one need not assume that a spirit of nationalism necessarily develops a warlike nation as it has in some countries.

To be sure, every soldier in college or university did not sit around philosophizing about the American language, but to one of another generation it was a strange spectacle to see young people proud of their language, a language slangy but expansive. It was the practice of the twenties and thirties to scoff at everything American—from Rotary to the American language itself. Men turned to the Old World for things to admire, often fleeing in disgust from these crass shores to live in other more cultural lands.

An awareness of other similarities has likewise tended to nationalize these men. For example, a football game is as meaningful to a man from Florida as it is to a

man from a state three thousand miles away. When a soldier who had attended Auburn gave an account of the victory of his school over Georgia, every soldier in the class of thirty men was thrilled by the achievement of the underdog and by the mutual sympathies that a thrilling American game of football could arouse in an ordinary American boy. It was not Auburn, but his own school, perhaps thousands of miles away, that defeated Georgia. Football or any other sport is a significant index. Men overseas are as eager for news of sports as they are for news of the war. Sports are one concrete expression of the abstraction: "What America means to me." Sectionalism gives way to nationalism.

It was not always football that made these men aware that they believed in America. To some men it was a small town in Connecticut or California. It might have been Chico State College, the plains of Illinois, or the Sunday trips they used to make to Coney Island as children. Obviously, to be deprived of something makes a person yearn for that something. But these men in college were philosophical about why they miss things, as their oral and written work in class revealed.

But their newly discovered love of America was not astigmatic; these men were not blind toward the rest of the world. Some had been overseas and in battle; perhaps most of the men had already seen, or will eventually see, more of the world than any equal number of any one preceding generation of Americans ever did. Courses in history, motion pictures, military lectures, and often good bull sessions gave these soldiers accurate knowledge about the rest of the world. They knew what our Allies are doing. Many have expressed the determination to help those starving in all the hungry

lands of the world. They are not willing to let the rest of the world go hang.

One other obvious reason for the growth of nationalism among these men is that any mobilization of men during wartime is bound to make a people nationalistic. At least three times as many men are now in the service as were in the American armed forces during the last World War. But those men in the colleges and universities had opportunities for mental growth denied the rest of the men in the armed forces.

Closely allied to these trends toward nationalism was the actual day-by-day practice of democracy by the soldiers themselves on the campuses. Life in a military service is inevitably standardized, and many distinctions—social, economic, and political—are likely to be de-emphasized. Yet I think that the men in college programs underwent a new type of experiment in the practice of democracy.

On the State College of Washington campus I knew a soldier who was a Beta from a large eastern university. His first themes and speeches were often extollations of fraternities, especially his own. Because of crowded conditions, his unit lived in a fraternity house on this campus, but it was not the Beta house, and his roommate was not a fraternity brother. His roommate was a boy of Mexican descent who had never seen a college fraternity before, at least from the inside; he had never finished high school, since he had been forced to go to work digging irrigation ditches in southern California. Yet the Army intelligence tests placed these two men on the same level. The Beta soon discovered some strange facts. He learned to respect and like someone he would have considered his inferior a few months before. Both men may now be fighting,

perhaps dying, in some foreign war zone. Should these men survive the war, they will remember that social rank means much less in America than they had been forced by conditioning to assume. They will respect each other, no matter how different their positions in the postwar world. One cannot help feeling that their positions will not be so divergent as they might have been had not the educational program been in existence.

In one class of Air Corps trainees I had a soldier whose father owned a rubber mill in Ohio. One of his closest friends was a former sharecropper. Another man in the same class had been a foreman in a department of the Boeing Aircraft Corporation in Seattle. One soldier in the class had been in the Army since 1940 and had received two decorations for action at Pearl Harbor and in the Solomons area, respectively. These men and hundreds of thousands more lived closely together under strict military discipline enjoying the purest democratic education ever offered free to so many young men.

Unless one asked, it was almost impossible to determine which men were rich, which poor. Perhaps an expensive wrist watch or pen-and-pencil set would betray a man, but not always. If cliques were formed, they were formed on a basis of mutual interests rather than on a basis of how much money any particular man happened to have in the bank. Perhaps never before have rich and poor had so much practice in democratic living. Social position and wealth were not the only unequalizing forces that grew tenuous in these programs. Racial discriminations were likewise shaken. For example, in reading soldiers' autobiographies, which served as the first written assignment in one course, I noticed that, in one Air Corps group of thirty men, I

had soldiers whose parents were Jews, Czechs, Swedes, Italians, Poles, Russians, and Germans, to mention but a few I can recall at the moment. Perhaps there were even more diverse representations of races and nationalities. These men lived together, and from all appearances, I should say, they acted as if they might have all been Italians or some other single nationality. I doubt whether any of those men will be driven to race hysteria by future rabble-rousers. The encouraging fact is that that one class was typical, not unique.

Forty per cent of one class taken at random told me that they had never attended college previous to entering the Army; furthermore, many were certain that they never would have been able to attend. To them college had been a place to which they had hoped to send their children if things went well in the dim future. One soldier, now at a primary flying school for pilots and scheduled to become a commissioned officer in a few months, had never done any other work than migratory farm labor in the South. Now he has a background of technical training and at least a smattering of liberal arts subjects. I remember one of his themes in which he described how he had wistfully watched planes flying overhead as he worked in the fields. To be able to fly was one of those wishful daydreams that the Army's college training program enabled him to realize. One need not doubt that he will fight for democracy and even preach it for the rest of his life. His case was repeated innumerable times in these programs.

It is not presumptuous to believe that these men will do all in their power to prevent wars in the future instead of leaving peace problems to politicians. I have heard these men agree with a recent article that armed forces of this

country should be represented at the peace conferences. Required courses in history gave these men a perspective they never would have had ordinarily.

They did not want to fight in order to kill other people. Combat means adventure, and it is the adventure that stirred these men. I venture to say that the majority of the men in the Air Corps were in the Air Corps partly because they anticipated a postwar boom in aviation; they wanted to be trained and prepared to step into jobs.

There are other reasons why these men will be aggressively pacifistic after the war. Despite their newfound spirit of nationalism and their practice in democratic living, they still feel that wars are anachronistic, something that belongs to the make-believe world of Hollywood. Vincent Sheean in *Personal History* relates how unhappy his generation of Army trainees in college were when the Armistice was signed in 1918. I never talked with a soldier in these college programs who did not yearn earnestly for peace.

One other fact, perhaps surprising to some, is that very few soldiers in these programs really learned to hate the enemy. The enemy, be he German or Japanese, was, to most soldiers with whom I had talked, a misguided person. No doubt situations have arisen on the battlefield in which American soldiers have been driven insane with rage, but the college-trained soldier is usually too philosophical for rage in the abstract.

On this campus there were civilian Japanese students who had been released from internment camps and were taking college courses. I never heard of any soldier saying or doing anything against these Japanese. These soldiers in colleges will face the enemy when the time comes for them to do so, and they will face that

enemy with a calm realization of the melancholy job they have to do before peace can come.

Militarism per se will not be perpetuated by these men. If many remain in the services after the war, their reason will be practical for so doing; it will not be because they love to wear uniforms. Much as the soldiers respect their officers, every private is certain he is as good a

man as the highest general. To most soldiers Knute Rockne is still the greatest general produced in America.

All in all, then, the military programs adopted for practical purposes have had only salutary repercussions that will have justified the necessary expenditure of time and money. It is a little ironical that it has taken a war to bring about such results.

The State-Wide English Program in Tennessee

JOHN C. HODGES¹

DURING the last two years the Tennessee Council of Teachers of English has served as a rallying-center for the various groups seeking to improve English teaching in Tennessee. Perhaps no other single organization could have received such full co-operation. The Tennessee Council is not limited to any one section of the state. It is not restricted in its interests to one educational level but covers equally the grades, the high schools, and the colleges. It is entirely impartial as regards the thirty-odd colleges within the state. It has no political axe to grind. Its sole aim is the promotion of better English.

Although the Tennessee schools have shown marked improvement in many respects during the last few decades, the teaching of English has not kept pace with the general improvement. Recent tests show that English is now, on the average, the most poorly taught of all the subjects in the high schools. As the principal of a large high school expressed it, "English is the *sick* subject of our curriculum." This condition is widely recognized and deplored by English teachers and by school officials. There-

fore they have eagerly welcomed a positive, comprehensive program for better English. Indeed, they are themselves shaping that program, which is growing out of suggestions from all quarters of the state. As yet, the program is distinctly in the formative stage.

From the first it was recognized that any marked lifting of English standards throughout the state generally would be a back-breaking task. No one school or college, neither the state university nor even the State Department of Education, could do the job singlehandedly. Every educational agency in the state would be needed. If all of these could be united in a common program extending through a period of years, some real progress might be expected.

The program was formally launched in Nashville in the spring of 1942 at the annual meeting of the Tennessee Council of Teachers of English. At that time the Council treasury contained just \$116, and there was no visible means of adding materially to this sum. But any program extensive enough to reach the whole state would cost thousands of dollars yearly—or at least the equivalent in services rendered. Since the Council did not have

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adequate funds for direct action, it decided to work through organizations already functioning—through the schools, the colleges, and the State Department of Education. All these have responded generously. Their participation has added little, if anything, to their regular expenses but has acquainted them with the work and has aroused their interest in it. And the program has gone forward, perhaps better than if new machinery had been created for it.

Although the program has been expanding and changing in various ways, it has constantly kept in the foreground, first, a yearly test of the effectiveness of English teaching and, second—based on this test—a comprehensive plan for the improvement of teaching. The Tennessee Council is interested in the whole of English training, from the grades through college. Therefore, it has planned tests to show the effectiveness of the English training (1) of students completing the eighth grade, (2) of those completing high school, and (3) of those nearing graduation from college. Some testing has been carried on for the grades and the colleges, but it has been much more extensive for the high schools. The Council is working toward effective yearly testing on all three levels.

The testing of instruction in the high schools has thus far been more extensive simply because the machinery for such testing was already available. This machinery was found in the English placement test very commonly given in September to college freshmen. In normal times between three and four thousand freshmen enter Tennessee colleges yearly from Tennessee high schools. Although this number is far short of the fifteen or twenty thousand graduated each spring from the high schools, it is enough (especially when several consecutive years

are considered) to test the effectiveness of the English training of Tennessee high-school graduates. The Council was of the opinion that, if only the colleges throughout the state could be induced to pool the results of their English placement tests, a helpful yearly report on the efficiency of the high-school training might be prepared for individual English teachers and school officials.

At first the colleges feared that the suggested plan might offend school officials, on whom the colleges depend for their freshmen. But this fear was dispelled when the school officials themselves indorsed the plan. For the last two years the tests have been made and pooled, and the results have been sent out to English teachers, principals, and superintendents with this introductory statement: "The accompanying report is being sent at the request of the superintendents and principals assembled at the meeting of the Tennessee Education Association in Nashville, in April, 1942."

The colleges were also concerned lest the testing plan should foster invidious comparisons between colleges, which are keen rivals in the competition for students. The fear was calmed, however, by the assurance that the testing would be so managed as to avoid comparisons. Each college was asked (1) to give its English placement test *independently*; (2) to rank its freshmen from best to poorest, assigning percentile grades from 100 to 1; and (3) to report the results to the Tennessee Council of Teachers of English. Finally, the printed blank on which the Council pooled and sent out its reports to the individual high schools carried this statement at the bottom: "There is no basis for a comparison between colleges."

The independence of the colleges in determining the exact test to be given

is not without advantages—even apart from the fact that it seems necessary to insure full co-operation. For one thing, the diversity of the tests used has discouraged English teachers in the schools from coaching their students for a specific type of test. When inquiries are made—and they are made, both directly and indirectly—it can be pointed out that several kinds of tests are used. Some colleges give a standard objective test, such as the *Co-operative English Test* or the *Shepherd English Test*, or else make up an objective test of their own. Others use both an objective test and a theme written under supervision. Still others use only a series of themes written in class at the beginning of the college year. And this diversity is made greater by the tendency of colleges to change their testing methods from time to time. The wise teacher prepares his students for the test by training them in spelling, in vocabulary (through reading), and in the other fundamentals of English composition. Nothing less is adequate preparation.²

One obvious objection to the diversified testing is the variation that it permits in the grading. Each student is ranked only in relation to the other students in the particular college in which he is enrolled. A uniform objective examination, uniformly administered, would certainly give a more exact basis for comparing students in different colleges. But it should be pointed out that, for our purposes, approximate grades are sufficient; and the diversified testing does seem to give the approximate grade. A student who stands first in one college would probably be among the best in

another, the average student in one college would probably be among the average in another, and so on.

During the first year of this program twenty-six colleges from all parts of the state sent reports on their English placement tests to the office of the Tennessee Council, listing 3,183 students. After the name of each student appeared the name of the high school from which he had graduated, the name of his last English teacher, the name of the college he had entered, and his percentile rank on the placement test. The Council then proceeded to reclassify the 3,183 names according to the 378 high schools from which the students had graduated. Often a high school had sent its graduates to several colleges, but all were brought together in a single list, one copy of which was mailed to the senior English teacher and another to the high-school principal. In the case of schools with two or more senior teachers, each teacher received a list giving only his own students. The principal, however, received a copy of the list sent to each teacher, showing both the average for each teacher and the general average for the school. Since all scores were percentiles, teachers and principals were thus informed of their standing in relation to others within the state.

Each of the 103 superintendents—in 95 counties and 7 cities—received a summary statement for the schools under his supervision. For the detailed statement he was referred to the list available in the office of each principal. Finally, general summary reports showing the average of each school and of each county were sent to the state commissioner of education, to the state high-school supervisor, and to each of the three state high-school visitors. For the second year of the testing the same general summary

² The high-school teachers who rank highest on the tests have broad English programs; they emphasize the study of literature as well as sound drill in mechanics.

reports were sent out, with a column added to give the results of the second test. A third column will be added for the next report. The records of several consecutive years enable the supervisor and his assistants to note developments and to encourage progress.

The Tennessee Council realizes that its present yearly testing plan can reach only the small percentage of high-school graduates who enter Tennessee colleges. Perhaps a plan may be worked out later to test the whole graduating class of every school. In the meantime the Council is testing the group it can reach. Fortunately, this group seems large enough, and representative enough, to give a very fair sample of the efficiency of the teaching. Furthermore, the testing reaches into every county system and into every city system in the state: it touches the whole state.

On the basis of each yearly test the Tennessee Council makes up honor lists of schools. First honors, for averages above 65, were awarded to 48 schools the first year and to 59 schools the second. Second honors, for averages that are lower but still above the general average for the state, are given to even larger numbers of schools. The standard for second honors has been kept reasonably low in order to awaken a broad interest in the competition. The very fact that a school is not on one of the honor lists serves notice that the school is at best only average and gives it something to answer for in the community. The honor lists have attracted much attention. They are given wide publicity through the *Tennessee Teacher*, a monthly magazine that reaches practically all the state's teachers. Public interest has been sufficient to cause republication in daily and weekly papers throughout the state.

This publicity given to the schools be-

cause of their work in English tends to emphasize the importance of the English teacher. Too frequently in the past no special skill has been considered necessary to teach the mother-tongue. But the yearly reports to the principal show him that only the efficient English teacher can get results. And the community interest in the rating of the school makes him the more concerned to maintain the quality of the English teaching.

The testing on a state-wide basis is an effort to give eyes to the teachers and school officials in every county, to let them see themselves in relation to the rest of the state. If and when the individual English teacher comes to realize that he needs assistance, he can be induced to seek it out: the principal can advise him more intelligently and more effectively. One school official summarized the results of the two yearly tests and sent these to the principals of the six high schools under his supervision. He called attention to the detailed reports already sent by the Tennessee Council to each principal and concluded: "I suggest that you and your English teachers devote some study to these reports. Especially those teachers whose students have been low on both reports should be urged to review critically their entire teaching procedures." Such support as this from school officials helps greatly to furnish the motive for improving English teaching, through helpful advice to those teachers who are now least successful.

This business of helping teachers, of giving them a more effective English program to follow, has already been mentioned as the second big objective of the Tennessee Council. In fact, the whole yearly testing plan is only a means of reaching this second objective. The information and the motivation provided

as a result of the testing is causing many schools to work independently toward a more effective English course. The Council, for its part, is seeking tangible ways and means to promote the most effective methods of teaching English.

But what are the most effective methods? The Tennessee Council has no pet system of its own. Neither does it try to pick and choose, among the many excellent practices of "conservatives" and "progressives," those that the Council considers best adapted to the schools. It prefers simply to recommend the methods of those teachers who are proving their efficiency by the high standing of their students.

The yearly testing brings into clear relief the most effective English teachers. Two years of pooling placement tests from twenty-six colleges have made a score of teachers stand out like mountain peaks over the state. To the evidence of the last two years can be added statistics collected during the preceding fourteen years on some ten thousand freshmen entering the University of Tennessee. The available statistics reveal those teachers who have been unusually successful over a period of years. Such teachers have proved that they know what should go into a sound English course. If the common denominator of their teaching practices can be found, the Tennessee Council will have something to recommend with confidence.

During the last two years the Tennessee Council has been studying the work of these outstanding teachers as a basis for a teacher's manual. Representatives of the Council have spent many hours in the classrooms of these teachers to observe their procedures, and the

teachers themselves have prepared detailed outlines of their courses. The representatives and the teachers concerned make up a sort of informal committee to prepare the English manual, which is to be issued by the State Department of Education. It is hoped that this material will be ready for publication by the fall of 1945. Although the manual now projected will concern itself primarily with the four years of the high school—Grades IX–XII, inclusive—it should be applicable in part to the grades and in part to college. Later the Council hopes to prepare a manual more specifically for the earlier years.

The Tennessee Council of Teachers of English is not waiting, however, for publication of the teacher's manual before getting under way its program for the improvement of teaching. Through the members of the State Department of Education and interested English teachers in all parts of the state, it is encouraging study groups, county by county or district by district. For example, one of the district visitors for the high schools has recently held eleven conferences with high-school principals on improving the English program. On checking later, he found that these principals had held 142 special faculty meetings to work toward a better English program, had made 288 visits to classrooms in the interest of supervising English improvement, and had held 276 personal conferences with English teachers with the same end in view. This is only one of many instances in which English teachers and school officials are co-operating wholeheartedly in the state-wide effort to raise the standard of English teaching in Tennessee.

Basic English: World Language or World Philosophy?

CHAD WALSH¹

I

IN HIS speech at Harvard University on September 6, 1944, Prime Minister Churchill said:

Some months ago I persuaded the British Cabinet to set up a committee of ministers to study and report upon Basic English. Here you have a plan—there are others—but here you have a very carefully wrought plan for an international language capable of very wide transactions of practical business and of interchange of ideas.

With the Prime Minister's words, Basic English acquired the most distinguished of its long list of advocates. The press of America and England, which had printed only sporadic discussions during the fourteen years that Basic English had been before the public, blossomed forth with innumerable articles. In English publications there was a good deal of mild irony at Mr. Churchill's expense, but many of the American newspaper and magazine articles welcomed Basic English with pleased surprise and urged it as the solution to the world's obvious need for an international auxiliary language.

None of the articles, however, went much beyond a brief description of Basic English and a recital of the uses proposed for it. In this present treatment I want to take up several more specific questions: Is Basic English easy for a foreigner to learn? Is it adequate for "very wide transactions of practical busi-

ness and of interchange of ideas"? What effect would it have on international thinking?

II

Basic English is simply an abbreviated variety of ordinary English. There are only eighteen verbs, and the vocabulary is restricted to the smallest possible number of words.

Taking the last feature first, the figure "850" has been widely used in publicizing the brevity of the Basic English word list. Actually, it is somewhat misleading. There are only 850 words in the list which is often reproduced in magazine articles, but their number can be greatly increased in a variety of ways. The rules of the system permit the formation of derivatives by using the suffixes *-er* (for example, *printer*), *-ing* (*drinking*), *-ed* (*damaged*), and *-ly* (*happily*), and the prefix *-un* (*unable*), provided that the resulting words are good English. Words from the Basic list can also be combined to form compounds. In some of these, such as *bedroom* and *raincoat*, the meaning is obvious, but others would be more puzzling to a foreigner—*without*, *copyright*, *undertaking* (*under* plus *take* plus *-ing*), and even *become* (*be* plus *come*!).

The ordinary English words for measurements, numerals, units of money, and dates are used, even though they do not appear on the list of 850 words, and 50 "international words," such as *automobile*, *bar*, *beer*, *club*, *influenza*, and

¹ Dr. Walsh is in government service for the duration of the war.

piano, are permitted. In addition to all these, there is a special list of 100 general "scientific" words, many of which (*mineral* and *kidney*, for instance) would occur frequently in ordinary conversation, and it is planned to have supplementary lists of about 50 words each for the particular branches of science.

Obviously, then, Basic English has far more than 1,000 words; but, even so, the figure is very small compared to the 10,000 or so that the average high-school student uses with ease.

If the size of the vocabulary were the only measure of difficulty, Basic English would be the easiest of all languages to learn. Unhappily, the mere memorizing of words is only a small step toward speaking, writing, and understanding. Idiom rears its ugly head. Messrs. Ogden and Richards, the creators of Basic English, joyfully eliminated the verb *to tolerate* and suggested that a phrase like *to put up with* could take its place. A Spanish speaker might not share their joy. The sentence, "America puts up with all religions," would either sound like gibberish or vaguely suggest that something was being put on a shelf. The Basic English phrase might as well be entered in an English-Spanish dictionary as *putupwith* and learned as a single word, except that the teacher would have to point out that this verb has the peculiarity of being inflected in the middle. One says, "America has been *puttingup-with* all religions for a long time," instead of "America has been *putupwithing* all religions for a long time."

Ordinary English is full of such idiomatic phrases, but Basic English enormously increases the number that occur per page. An attempt is *given up*; men *make their minds up*; plants *come into flower*; soldiers *put* their enemies *to death*; food *gives out*; a decision is *put off*.

To make the confusion worse, many of these unanalyzable phrases have a multitude of meanings, as witness the following anecdote in Basic English:

A man and the woman he was married to put up a house, and his mother put up with them. The mother put up many tins of fruit, but she would never put them up in the cupboard. At last the woman he was married to was unable to put up with her any more, so she put up a sign, "House to let," and went away on the train.

English idioms seem natural enough to an English speaker. He never stops to realize that the individual words mean nothing—the meaning lies in the arbitrary combination of words. The simplicity disappears when the shoe is on the other foot. Take the sentence, "I passed the building." The Germans perversely say, "I went at the building along" ("Ich ging am Gebäude vorbei"). No English speaker, so far as I know, has grown lyrical over this wonderful economy of vocabulary.

Not only does a small vocabulary multiply the idioms but it also increases the risk of ambiguity by making the words work overtime. The average word on the Basic list has over a dozen separate meanings in the *Oxford Dictionary*. *Get* has more than fifty: "I got the food ready," "I got in the car," "I got the car in," "I got a present for Christmas," "We got to the station," etc. In addition to the danger of misunderstanding, these overworked words impose a severe strain on the foreigner's memory. He might learn the Basic vocabulary in two weeks, but he would have to spend a couple of extra days learning all the places where *get* can be used and mastering the prepositions and other words that go with it to form phrases. In ordinary English, if the foreigner cannot remember whether to say "I got *at* the station" or "I got *to* the

station," he has the alternative of simply saying "I reached the station."

III

We come now to the verb and its peculiar status in Basic English. In the words of Mr. Richards, the verb is "notoriously the foreign learner's chief obstacle," and "the 'breakdown' of the verb . . . was the key to the invention of Basic."

In theory there are only eighteen verbs in Basic English: *come, give, go, put, seem, be*, and ten others, plus the auxiliaries *may* and *will*. These eighteen words are used to manipulate the hundreds of idioms. Unfortunately for the foreigner, the inventors of Basic English were extremely anxious for their product to read and sound as much like ordinary English as possible. About half of the six hundred Basic English nouns have *-ed* and *-ing* forms in ordinary English (for example, *question, questioned, questioning*), and Ogden and Richards permit these derived forms to be used as long as they can be called adjectives. "He was questioned by me" is good Basic, because *questioned* is analyzed as an adjective; but one cannot say "I questioned him." The sentence has to be rephrased: "I put questions to him."

There are also certain present participles and past participles on the list of adjectives, but the verbs from which they came cannot be used. It is correct to say "The law was broken by me" but not "I broke the law."

The whole matter of the Basic English verb, and its strange twilight status, is too complicated to be examined in detail here, but some of the do's and don't's confronting a foreigner can be summarized in the form of a chart:

YOU CAN SAY: YOU CANNOT SAY:

The law was broken by me.	I broke the law.
They were hanging him.	He was hanged.
The storm was damaging the building.	The storm damaged the building.
The seeds have been planted.	I have planted the seeds.

In place of the four forbidden phrases the foreigner must learn phrases like "I went against the law," "He was put to death by hanging," "The storm did damage to the building," and "I have put seeds in the earth."

Even the proud Anglo-Saxons would go berserk trying to remember when is a verb a verb—or they would proceed in blissful ignorance. An apartment store recently published a large advertisement, which read in part:

ADVERTISEMENT IN BASIC ENGLISH—
HELP LIMIT TIME OF WAR!
THE BUSINESS OF WAR NEEDS MONEY!
SUPPORT YOUR GOVERNMENT!

In his patriotic ardor the merchant had undermined one of the most fundamental features of Basic English. He had used nouns as plain verbs. In correct Basic the advertisement would read something like this:

ADVERTISEMENT IN BASIC ENGLISH—
BE OF HELP IN LIMITING TIME OF WAR!
THE BUSINESS OF WAR HAS NEED OF MONEY!
GIVE SUPPORT TO YOUR GOVERNMENT!

In connection with Mr. Richards' belief that the verb is "notoriously the foreign learner's chief obstacle," it is interesting to observe that, of the eighteen Basic verbs, only one is completely regular (*seem, seemed, seemed*). The remaining seventeen, when their principal parts are listed, look as though they had been chosen to illustrate the wildest vagaries of the English verb system (*come, came, come; give, gave, given; go, went, gone;*

put, put, put; be [am, is, are], was [were], been, etc.). On the other hand, practically all of the three hundred verbs that could be made from the Basic nouns are perfectly regular, with the past tense and past participle formed by adding *-ed*. Since the foreigner has to learn the inflexions of these words anyway, in order to use them as "adjectives," there is no common-sense reason for not permitting and encouraging him to use them as plain verbs also. Anyone who can manipulate *to be* in all tenses, numbers, and moods should have no trouble with *to question*. The free use of nouns as verbs is on the increase in modern English. By utilizing this very handy linguistic device, Basic English could get rid of "I put questions to him" and hundreds of other awkward phrases.

A man who spent years teaching English in Korea once told me that his students had a great facility for memorizing verbs, even the longest mouth-fillers, but that they were at a total loss when it came to idiomatic verb phrases. They could learn to say "I built the house" or "I constructed the house" much more readily than "I put up the house," even though they had to learn an extra word.

Even if Messrs. Ogden and Richards are unwilling to introduce additional words like *build*, they should give better reasons than they have yet presented for dangling *help, limit, need, support*, and hundreds of others nouns before the foreigner but allowing him to use them as verbs only under restrictions so complicated that English speakers themselves are baffled. The Koreans, Spaniards, and Russians have a right to ask why it is easier to say "I went up in the air by jumping" than "I jumped."

IV

If Basic English is adequate for "very wide transactions of practical business

and of interchange of ideas," it will be used to sell tractors in Argentina, to hold scientific conferences in Paris, and for religious and diplomatic meetings of all kinds. It will serve for reserving a seat on a transatlantic clipper, ordering a meal in a restaurant, and making love. Some of the more specialized needs have already been anticipated. A list of about fifty extra words is promised for each field of science. Presumably the inventors of Basic would also supply on demand additional lists of fifty words each for diplomats, lovers, etc.

The first fallacy displayed by Messrs. Ogden and Richards is their belief that fifty words, or one hundred words, for that matter, are enough to take care of the specialized needs of any particular class of globe-trotters. The vocabulary of linguistics, with its *ablaut, umlaut, polysynthetic*, and *phoneme*, sounds like mumbojumbo, but the concepts represented by these words and literally hundreds of others occur so frequently in linguistic discussions that if long-winded phrases had to be substituted for any large number of them, the linguists of the world would decide that it took too much breath to talk shop and that the best thing was to become soda-jerkers. The word *phoneme*, for example, might be roughly defined in Basic as *smallest unit of sound that makes the sense of a word different*; but if such a phrase had to be used ten times on one page, and equally long phrases for several other linguistic concepts were thrown in, the result would be intolerably tiring and confusing. Any other kind of scientist would be equally hamstrung by being deprived of most of the exact, technical vocabulary built up by generations of research workers in his field. Businessmen, with their *invoices, rebates, and samples*, would find a mere fifty words completely inadequate. Even the housewife, whose

tasks are supposed to be down to the earth and universal, would keenly miss *broom*, *sweep*, and the hundreds of other specialized words she uses every day. "I must sweep the kitchen" would become in Basic English, "It is necessary for me to take a brush and go over the floor of the room where food is got ready."

The second fallacy is the naïve belief that people talk shop all the time. In reality, many physicists confer with aeronautical engineers; and, when they take the clipper to distant lands, they may become good-will ambassadors, tourists, lovers, or all three. Unless we develop an antlike society, in which each person keeps to his allotted niche à la Nazi, everyone will be something of a Jack-of-all-trades in his interests. He will have to learn not only the eight hundred and fifty words, plus weights, measures, dates, derivatives, compounds, and international words but also the hundred general science words and most of the special lists of fifty words each. If the process continues, and the Basic English sponsors sincerely try to meet the actual needs of international travelers, the absolutely essential vocabulary will be too large to print on a sheet of notebook paper, and one of the main justifications and talking points of Basic English will vanish.

V

Up to now, this discussion has had a somewhat technical flavor. We have been looking at Basic English through the microscope of linguistic analysis. The verdict seems to be that the system, with its mass of idioms, its chaotic verb rules, and its inadequate vocabulary, cannot possibly meet the needs of either the single-track specialist or the international Jack-of-all-trades.

It may be, however, that the defects which loom so large when Basic English

is put beneath the microscope would shrink to smaller size in actual practice. Suppose that Basic English is practical and that the nations of the world accept it as an international language.

If that happens, I would like to put on the prophets' mantle and predict that something new in the world's history will happen. Instead of man's ideas and ideals molding the language he uses, Basic English will begin to mold man's ideas and ideals. The ultimate result will be something that few of the people, who now come forward with a facile enthusiasm for Basic English, would consciously choose to bring about.

The strange limitation on the use of verbs in Basic English has already been mentioned. Mr. Richards defends it as a simplification for foreigners, but the real motive lies deeper. Mr. Ogden, who is apparently the dominant partner in the team of Ogden and Richards, does not like verbs. In his Bentham Centenary Lecture, delivered at University College, London, in 1932, Mr. Ogden said: "I would remind you that he [Bentham] regarded the verb as a sort of linguistic eel—a slippery rhetorical luxury, requiring systematic stabilization by auxiliaries." In countless other ways (including his prophecy that the coming century will be known as the "age of Bentham.") Mr. Ogden reveals himself as a disciple of Jeremy Bentham. Therefore, it is to the great English utilitarian philosopher of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that we must turn if we want to understand the underlying attitude of mind that shaped Basic English.

Bentham did good in many ways—he was a courageous fighter for prison amelioration and other reforms—but the side of Bentham that permeates Ogden's thinking is his cocksure rationalism, his hatred of anything that he could not stub his toe against. Abstract words and

verbs were anathema to him. He associated them with abominations like religion. Mankind, he believed, could never be truly free until the strange power of language had been broken. Words such as *God*, *heaven*, *hell*, *save*, and *damn*, mumbled by the privileged classes, fill men with blind awe and enslave them.

In his war on verbs Mr. Ogden is dutifully following Bentham. But the influence of Bentham is much more far-reaching than this. It subtly controls the choice of words on the Basic list. Consciously or unconsciously, Mr. Ogden devised Basic English as an intellectual strait jacket to discourage the thinking of thoughts that Bentham would not have approved of.

For example, the outward signs of organized religion are represented by *church* and *religion*, but *God*, *heaven*, *hell*, *soul*, *spirit*, and *forgiveness* are missing. Since no one can seriously deny that many people in many countries want to discuss religion, the only justification for omitting the most common religious terms is to make it as difficult as possible for people to think about such matters.

Some of the defenders of Basic English might seize on these omissions as a virtue. "After all, science has not proved that God or the soul exists." Such a plea reveals an unconscious but overwhelming presumptuousness. Aristotle, Newton, and Einstein all rolled into one would not have the wisdom to decide whether or not God exists. Language is not an encyclopedia of science, in any case. It is a tool for discussing anything that people want to talk about. If a large part of mankind believes in the existence of purple-and-yellow dragons, any international language should have a word for the creature, so that the believers and skeptics can thresh the dispute out and perhaps arrive at some measure of truth

and understanding. If a much larger part of humanity believes in God and the soul, it is medieval dogmatism in reverse to wave a test tube and say, "Naughty, naughty, mustn't say naughty words," or to offer lame substitutes like a *higher being*, which might be God and might be a giraffe.

Philosophic terms and abstract words in general fare no better than religion. Here again the ghost of Bentham is active. A few colorless words like *education*, *society*, and *government* are accepted, but Basic English does not permit us to talk of the four *freedoms*, and we cannot tell Hitler and Koiso that we are fighting for *democracy*. The great mass of abstract concepts, if they are to be expressed at all, must be rendered by mouth-filling phrases. In Basic English, *beauty* is "the quality of being very pleasing to eye, ear, or mind."

From his own viewpoint, Mr. Ogden's war on abstract words is highly moral. They are enemies of his neat view of the universe. To Mr. Ogden, anyone is deceiving himself when he talks about intangible things like *liberty*, *justice*, and *beauty*. There is no such thing as liberty; there are only situations in which people are at liberty to act in such and such a way. No matter where we go after death, we will never find *liberty* floating around in its platonic state.

However, this is boxing with straw men. There are really very few people who expect to shake hands with *liberty* and *beauty* is some afterworld. Abstractions are simply linguistic and cultural shorthand. When we say *democracy* we are symbolizing a whole way of life. We are summarizing centuries of history and placing a guidepost for the future that we desire. It takes a book to define democracy. The concept is too complex and too wrapped up in human living to be

expressed in an epigram or a Basic English phrase. Democracy must be lived and felt, and when you talk about it, the best word to use is *democracy*. Hitler and company might be glad for us to forget the word, since it increases our longing to drop block-busters on German factories; but Hitler's gain is our loss.

If Basic English did actually become the world's second language, all ideas designed for international consideration would be written in it. Seeing that any idealistic or philosophical concept becomes impossibly clumsy and diluted when constantly paraphrased, thinkers would unconsciously be pushed toward the mechanistic, man-is-a-product-of-the-physical-universe reasoning that was so popular during the twenties, and which in Germany helped dry up all good ideals and leave the Germans ready for the false but vigorous ideals of naziism.

Of all countries, America and Britain would be most drastically affected by Basic English. Other countries could keep their national languages for novels, poetry, and fireside talk, but in the Anglo-Saxon world there would be powerful pressures toward the relegation of ordinary English to the position of a rustic dialect. Book publishers could make much more money by publishing everything in Basic English, so as to edge into foreign markets without the expense of a translation. Radio stations would more and more make their broadcasts in Basic English, as part of a vague policy of international good will—and cultural

imperialism. The movie companies would see the chance for enormous markets by making their films in the international language. In time, ordinary English might sound provincial, and Basic English would be the everyday speech of America and the British Empire.

From a broad viewpoint it is clear that Basic English suffers from a dichotomy of purpose. It is meant to be a simple, workable international language, but at the same time it is a philosophic tool, designed to remake mankind in the image of Jeremy Bentham and C. K. Ogden. The result is a weird mixture that, fortunately, would probably break down if it were adopted as an international language. But the possibility that it might succeed is a terrifying one and something that should check the rush to the bandwagon.

As for the broader philosophical implications, Basic English already has a slightly archaic flavor. Men are no longer as sure as they were in the twenties that the world is a neatly organized physical universe and that man differs from an electron only in the complexity of his physical structure. The mathematicians and physicists, whose findings were the mainstay of the philosophical amateurs of the twenties, are increasingly willing to acknowledge the stone walls that confront them everywhere when they go a certain distance in their sciences.

Beyond the stone walls may lie another kind of truth, but Basic English is not the language for speculating about such matters.

The cocktail lounge of the Mayflower, in the nation's capital, continues to be a fertile source of memorable cracks, the latest of which is the following: "The trouble with foreigners is most of 'em speak English *too*."—*New Yorker*.

Current English Forum

Conducted by

PORTER G. PERRIN, ALBERT H. MARCKWARDT, JAMES B. MCMILLAN,
AND JULIUS BERNSTEIN

Two readers have asked for more extensive discussion of the distinction between abstract and concrete nouns, and one reader has objected to the classification (January "Current English Forum") of *heat*, *cold*, *weather*, and *chilliness* as abstract nouns, saying that she would unhesitatingly call these concrete nouns because they name something which is perceptible to the senses.

It is useful to keep before us the fact that the difference between concrete and abstract words arises when we are teaching style, particularly style in diction. Textbooks on rhetoric advise the novice writer to use abstract words only when necessary and to use concrete words to gain vividness, clarity, and precision. Thus Donald Davidson says:

In writing that puts an emphasis on physical objects, as in description and narration, as well as much of the detail of expository writing, concrete diction is a prime necessity, for without concreteness there is unlikely to be exactness and clearness. . . . Both abstract and concrete words will appear in all good writing. Neither, in its proper place, is better than the other.¹

The same thing, in different words, is found in any standard rhetoric.

The classroom teacher faces an immediate problem when the pupil reads such advice and wants to know how to tell a concrete word from an abstract word. It is easy to say that abstract words denote general properties apart from any particular things or events and that concrete words denote specific things or events. But a simple, practical test for applying this distinction in the classroom is hard to devise because English

does not have one regular grammatical form to mark the distinction. To indicate abstraction we use *-ness* in *selfishness*, *-dom* in *freedom*, *-th* in *death*, *-ship* in *kinship*, *-ty* in *duty*, *-hood* in *brotherhood*, and several other devices. Further, most words with these endings can be used in concrete sense, as *a kindness* (meaning an act of kindness), *two deaths* (meaning specific deceases), *the duties* (meaning particular functions). Such examples make it plain that a word is abstract or concrete in a particular meaning, not necessarily in any or every meaning.

The occurrence of words in both concrete and abstract senses does not prevent our making the distinction, for we notice that, when a word like *kindness* is abstract, it occurs only in the singular and cannot be modified by the article *a*. When it is used concretely, it can be modified by *a*, and it occurs in the plural. One of our readers objects that we say, "The postman goes out in all weathers," thus using *weather* in the plural and we refer to the "loves and hates of childhood." However, in such expressions we mean "kinds of weather" and "kinds of love" or "objects of love," not the abstractions *love* and *weather*. Occurrence in the plural or being modified by an article serves as a useful grammatical test of concreteness. This test cannot be used alone, since some concrete nouns denoting materials (like *wool* and *silver*) do not have plurals, but as an aid to the test of meaning it is very reliable.

The test of meaning is to inquire whether the thing denoted occurs in one or more specimens, or whether it occurs only as a quality or condition of something else. *Cruelty*, *beauty*, *youth*, *depth*, *justice*, *malice*, *goodness*,

¹ *American Composition and Rhetoric* (New York: Scribner's, 1939), pp. 302-3.

frankness—these denote properties of specific things. Concrete words like *rock*, *book*, *pencil*, *finger*, *table*, denote specific things, not properties of things. If we can find specimens of a thing, we indicate the fact grammatically and automatically by allowing the name of the thing to be pluralized and to be modified by an article. Thus the occurrence of a plural form argues strongly that the noun is concrete, at least in the sense represented by the plural form.

It is tempting to try to define a concrete word as one denoting something that is perceived by seeing, tasting, smelling, touching, or hearing, since it is precisely this *sensational* quality of concrete words that makes them preferable in certain kinds of writing. But this involves us in a difficult psychological problem which psychologists themselves have battled over for many years. When we feel hot, do our senses perceive pure "heat" or hot air? Our correspondent who thinks *chilliness* should be called concrete says that when New Jersey has a cold wave she wraps up to protect herself from a very real chilliness, not an abstraction. But the grammarian would insist that chilliness is a condition of the air, furniture, etc., since we can't locate a specimen of chilliness alone; it is always a property of something which is chilly.

A useful classroom procedure to discover whether a particular noun is abstract or concrete is to ask first whether the thing denoted occurs as a specific thing or event. It is helpful to ask whether it can be pictured or diagramed. Dictionaries define many concrete nouns by printing pictures of the thing denoted. Supplementing this test with the question of the occurrence of the noun *in the sense being discussed* with an article or in the plural will ordinarily give a satisfactory answer.

Q. The handbook I am using says of *kind* and *sort*: "There is such a strong plural idea in these words that they are used colloquially as plurals." Does this mean that

these kind or *those sort* may be used in cultivated spoken English?

H. R.

A. They may be and they are; or perhaps we should say they are, and therefore they may be. Old-fashioned handbooks condemn the use of a plural modifier before *kind* and *sort*, but such handbooks do not pretend to describe "cultivated spoken English." The judges queried for the Leonard study rated *these kind* as "uncultivated," but the linguists among the judges rated it "disputable." Jespersen calls the construction "familiar"; and Curme says: "At the present time this construction is still used in England in colloquial speech. . . . In America it is now largely confined to popular speech." Marckwardt and Walcott, in *Facts about Current English Usage*, label *these kind* "CE" (colloquial English). Fries, in his extensive study of American English, found that *these* and *those* frequently modify *kind* and *sort*, but he found not a single occurrence of the construction in the language of the least educated people. This suggests that we should not hesitate to label *these kind* colloquial, and it further suggests that additional study of the expression is desirable.

J. B. McM.

Q. Is the spelling *pinchers* for *pincers* ever acceptable?

L. C. D.

A. The spelling *pinchers* is perfectly acceptable, according to modern dictionaries. However, *pinchers* is not "for *pincers*." As Kenyon and Knott point out in their *Pronouncing Dictionary of American English*, *pinchers* is an old English noun, formed by adding *-er* to the verb *pinch*; it is not a "mistake" for *pincers*. The usual American spoken word is *pinchers*; the person who says *pinchers* and writes *pincers* is misspelling the word to demonstrate that he is acquainted with the British word *pincers*. The fact that the British and the American words mean the same thing leads several reputable dictionaries to make the questionable statement that *pincers* is the plural of *pincher*.

J. B. McM.

Summary and Report

About Literature

ESSAYS ABOUT LITERATURE ARE infrequent these days, with so many writers and periodicals preoccupied with the urgent problems of the moment and of the future. Happily, the *Saturday Review of Literature* weekly freshens and renews the almost dry stream and keeps hope green for a better day, and it was agreeable to find that the current quarterly issues of the *Sewanee Review* and the *Kenyon Review* keep good faith with belles-lettres and are well worth a thorough browsing.

IN THE *SEWANEE REVIEW* MORTON Zabel writes of Joseph Conrad, Irene Hendry of the regional novel, and Ray B. West, Jr., of Ernest Hemingway's "Failure of Sensibility." Zabel's essay, subtitled "Chance and Recognition," is an excellent exposition of the fact that "Conrad's development as an artist reproduces, on the scale of his whole career as an artist over thirty years, the ordeal of self-mastery and spiritual exoneration which he dramatized repeatedly in the lives of his heroes."

Miss Hendry is concerned with the regional novel of the South, which she analyzes briefly, and then uses Robert Penn Warren as an example who reverses the usual regionalistic forms. Warren "is a moral writer," she finds; "a psychologic-moral writer," since "the values to which he refers are founded not on a theory of God, economics, or the state, but a particular conception of the nature of man." In his *Night Rider* and *At Heaven's Gate* he uses the familiar regional themes of "the Southerners" to represent or illustrate his problems, but he deals with psychological problems per se. "Self-knowledge is the theme of the two novels," and the value of Warren's "modest treatment of the problem is that he suggests

individual effort is not quite vain, that the solution may be at least partially moral and come from within."

Hemingway, in his shift from a negative to an affirmative philosophy, according to Mr. West, exhibits "failure of that insight—that sensitivity—which is part and parcel of his style." West defines sensibility as "that perceptivity or natural awareness of the artist for the variety and range of sense objects surrounding him in nature and which he consciously or unconsciously organizes or synthesizes into an artful pattern or form." He feels that Hemingway's weakness from the beginning has been that "he has attempted, in some place or another in every novel, to pause and comment upon his material—to force it to his own ideological end—to moralize." He sees hope for his becoming a greater artist in that Hemingway himself has never relaxed his self-searching. Another essay by West on Hemingway appears in the winter *Antioch Review*. This, subtitled "Death in the Evening," examines the novels chronologically in this particular connection.

AN ACIDULOUS ESSAY, "THE NEW York Wits," by Herbert Marshall McLuhan, appears in the *Kenyon Review*. It could have been subtitled, "Some Debunkers Debunked," for in some pretty sharp and straightforward analysis Mr. McLuhan writes briskly of the "shoddy unreality and bankruptcy" of the world portrayed by Dorothy Parker, Alexander Woollcott, James Thurber, Robert Benchley, Ogden Nash, and Edna St. Vincent Millay. He concludes: "They have debased the emotional and intellectual currency until educated people acclaim the tedious hokum of *Carmen Jones* or *Oklahoma* with the same

enthusiasm as they once acclaimed the emperor's new clothes."

D. S. SAVAGE, THE ENGLISH CRITIC, also deals sternly with W. B. Yeats in the same issue of the *Review*—so sternly that its editor, John Crowe Ransom, felt obliged to write an interesting editorial note of some three pages to temper Savage's severity. "The Aestheticism of W. B. Yeats" is an extract from an unpublished book by Savage. His thesis is epitomized in the following: "An artificer or bard, without a context, without standards he could accept from outside and without an inner spiritual pressure directed upon life, he turned inwards to center his attention upon art, he became an aesthete, and there resulted the development which is revealed in his work, a development in a vacuum." Mr. Ransom thinks that Savage is candid but that he fails to recognize certain of Yeats's strengths. An interesting essay to read in relation to this is that on "The Present State of Irish Literature" in the March *Atlantic* by John V. Kelleher, who is pretty hopeless about it and writes with characteristic Irish candidness about the Irish.

"FRENCH REACTION IN EXILE" BY Meyer Schapiro, a third essay in the *Kenyon Review*, describes *La Communion des forts*, a book of essays published in Mexico, by Roger Caillois, the editor of *Lettres française* and one of the outstanding younger writers. Schapiro feels it is important because he thinks it represents *avant-garde* thought. He is concerned because Caillois's suggestions for a new society are essentially reac-

tionary and the more dangerous because he detaches them from political aims and gives them a purely moral and formal direction.

A PERIODICAL, INTERESTING IN its entirety, is the March-April *Negro Story*. In case you have not seen this magazine, which is comparatively new, it is published six times a year and contains short stories and poetry "by or about Negroes for all Americans." Contributions to the present issue vary in quality, and some lack maturity, but all have vitality and honesty.

THEATRE ARTS FOR FEBRUARY contains a searching critique of the work of Somerset Maugham and a summing-up of his stature as a playwright. This is by Sewell Stokes, who discusses Maugham's approach to creative writing, the vogue of his plays, their lack of lasting value, and his contribution to the theater.

HENRY MILLER, THE MAN AND artist, is described by Gilbert Neiman in the winter *Rocky Mountain Review* in "No Rubbish, No Albatrosses, Henry Miller." Miller, himself, contributes to the same issue a short story, "Automotive Passacaglia." In the winter *Partisan Review* "Social Ambiguity in a Gothic Novel," by Wylie Sypher, analyzes Mrs. Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* to show that "her fiction is meaningful because it so inadequately conceals the naked contributions intrinsic in bourgeois romanticism, a revolt so radically inhibited that it failed to be in a deep social sense creative." Page John Livingston Lowes!

About Education

LAST FALL EDUCATORS REQUESTED fifteen frequency-modulation channels in hearing before the Federal Communications Commission. Instead of fifteen, they were granted twenty channels by F.C.C., according to a recent report on FM published by the Commission. Officials of the Office of Education radio division said this allocation

would permit establishing about eight hundred educational radio stations. If properly spaced, these radio stations would blanket every square mile of the United States. At the suggestion of the U.S. Office of Education, the University of Wisconsin will this summer conduct a special institute for FM educational planners, technicians, and ad-

ministrators. More than a hundred key persons responsible for the development of educational FM broadcasting are expected to attend. The first FM station workshop to be held in the United States is scheduled for June 19 to July 27, with sessions at Ohio State University and in Cleveland. Meanwhile, a primer of facts and ideas about the educational uses of frequency-modulation broadcasting has been published by the Office of Education under the title, *FM for Education*. The pamphlet, illustrated with photographs, charts, and diagrams, makes suggestions for planning and licensing of stations and answers questions on cost, use, potentialities, etc. It may be purchased from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington 25, for twenty cents. "FM and Education," by Ray C. Wakefield, commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission, in the February *Quarterly Journal of Speech* forecasts some of the uses to which educators may put frequency modulation. In the same magazine appears "Programming for Television," by Harrison B. Summers, manager of the Public Service Division of the Blue Network, also important for educators.

A HOPEFUL NOTE HAS ALSO RECENTLY been struck by the United States Chamber of Commerce. The nation's businessmen might well be expected to give more attention and more financial support to the public schools if the effort just begun by that organization is indorsed by local chambers all over the country. The Chamber of Commerce is attempting to show to businessmen that education is a good investment; that it is an investment in people which will pay off liberally. First step is the publication of a report seeking to show that there is a direct relationship between economic status and the educational level of the people of our country. The title of the booklet which summarizes the report is *Education—An Investment in People*. On the basis of its study, the United States Chamber of Commerce concludes in its report: (1) that

education is an essential instrument through which commerce, industry, and agriculture can be expanded to a rising degree; (2) that, since education has been and should continue to be a local function—at least on the state level—every community should ascertain its own educational status and economic condition and set to work to utilize education as a lever for its own advancement (the local community should join in a similar state program); and (3) that the cost of adequate education is an investment which local citizens and business can well afford in increased measure, when related step by step to the improvement of local economic conditions. A very small supply of copies of this report is available from the United States Chamber of Commerce, Washington, D.C., at fifty cents a copy.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND NATIONAL Defense, Bulletin 78 of the American Council on Education, is a summary of pertinent data regarding the veteran, a brief description of some of the services provided by a number of colleges and universities, and an analysis of some of the problems of education of veterans under Public Law 346—the Serviceman's Adjustment Act of 1944. This is an excellent bird's-eye view of various phases of a subject on which we should all be informed but with which it is hard to keep up and get the picture as a whole. An article, footnoting the Bulletin's brief report of the services provided by the University of Illinois, appears in a recent *Journal of Higher Education*. "What the Veterans Want," by Jessie Howard, is a report of the questionnaire sent to former students at that university.

THAT VETERANS MAY CONTINUE their education in foreign schools has been made possible by General Frank Hines, administrator of Veterans Affairs, who ruled that discharged men and women may use their G.I. funds to attend schools and colleges in foreign countries. Over and above the education which will be made possible through Veterans Administration benefits,

young men and women in service overseas will have at their disposal at least three other types of educational facilities to continue their education through the college level at the end of hostilities.

1. *The finest European universities.* Major General Frederick H. Osborn, of the Army Service Forces, says that "there will be available to the Army, and plans have been made to use them, certain foreign universities to which American students often go in peacetime to study." The General said that the Army is ready to train its men for peacetime as well as war activities. "Let me stress," he said, "that this second phase will not delay for a single day any man returning home when his turn comes. But while he is waiting, he will have the option of taking educational rather than military training. The schools will be there for those men who want what the schools will offer."

2. *Unit schools*, which will be organized by the soldier's own battalion. The unit school will offer only secondary education and junior-college subjects. "The work in all of these schools," General Osborn said, "has been organized in units of twenty hours, so that when a man's sailing orders come he can leave immediately for home and have accomplished recognized and easily measurable units of work."

3. *Army technical schools*, which will offer vocational and avocational training in technical

fields. These schools will use the equipment of the Army's technical branches, such as the Signal Corps, Corps of Engineers, etc.

APPOINTMENT OF DEAN VIRGINIA Gildersleeve, of Barnard College, as a member of the United States delegation to the United Nations Conference at San Francisco indicates, perhaps, the growing importance of educators in the formation of the peace. Dean Gildersleeve is the only educator in a group of distinguished nationally known figures going to San Francisco to help set up an international organization on the basis of the Dumbarton Oaks proposals. Her first nationally important effort on behalf of peace dates back to 1918, when she was the first chairman of the Committee on International Relations of the American Association of University Women. She was also a member of the American National Committee of the International Intellectual Cooperation of the League of Nations.

THE JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL Research is celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary. The January number is an anniversary edition and contains much of interest relating to progress in educational methods during the last twenty-five years.

Announcements

THE EDITORS OF THE *EXPLICATOR* announce a check list of explications for 1944, covering learned and literary periodicals and books, to be published with the index of Volume III of that useful little bulletin. It is believed that the check list will be invaluable to students and teachers of American and English literature. The committee engaged in the work solicits aid in two ways: bibliographical references to explications which have appeared in out-of-the-way places in 1944 and reprints of articles in 1944 which contain valuable explication. Items should be sent to the committee chairman, Roy P. Basler, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas.

REYNAL AND HITCHCOCK'S CHILDREN'S book department announces a "Youth Today" contest for books for young readers. The purpose of the contest is to stimulate the writing of books which add to the understanding and wisdom with which young people look at the age in which we live. An award of \$3,500 will be made for the most sensitive realistic treatment of some aspect of contemporary American life and youth problems, either fiction or nonfiction, designed for any group of ages between eight and eighteen. The contest will close February 1, 1946. Further details may be had by writing to Reynal and Hitchcock, Inc., 386 Fourth Avenue, New York 16.

National Council of Teachers of English

Election Notice

In accordance with the provisions of the recently amended constitution of the National Council of Teachers of English, the Board of Directors at Columbus elected as a Nominating Committee to propose officers for 1946: Lou LaBrant, Robert C. Pooley (chairman), Rachel Salisbury, Marquis Shattuck, and Ruth Mary Weeks. The nominations made by this committee and printed below are to be voted upon at the Annual Meeting of 1945. Additional nominations may be made by petition signed by twenty Council members and presented with the written consent of the nominees to the Secretary of the Council before August 10. There is also an *understanding* that nominations from the floor may be made.

The Nominating Committee's slate for officers (to be voted upon by the Board of Directors at Thanksgiving) is:

For President: HELENE W. HARTLEY,
Syracuse

For First Vice-President: WARD
GREEN, Tulsa

For Second Vice-President: H. A.
DOMINOCOVICH, Germantown, Pa.

For Secretary-Treasurer: W. WIL-
BUR HATFIELD, Chicago

The Committee's nominations for Directors-at-Large (to be voted upon by the Annual Business Meeting of all Council members) are:

EDNA STERLING, Spokane

MARION EDMAN, Detroit

BLANCHE TREZEVANT, Baton Rouge

EDNA TAYLOR, Janesville

WALTER BARNES, New York Uni-
versity

HARLEN ADAMS, Stanford Univer-
sity

The Nominating Committee proposes for the (traditional but not constitutional) Advisers to the Editor of the *English Journal*:

FLORENCE GUILD, Indianapolis

PRUDENCE BOSTWICK, Denver

ROBERTA GREEN, Tulane University

MIRIAM BOOTH, Erie

NELLIE APPY MURPHY, Arcata,
Calif.

1945 Meeting

The N.C.T.E. Board of Directors will meet in Minneapolis on Thanksgiving, the hotel to be announced later. A program meeting which Second Vice-President Mark Neville is planning for teachers in the imme-

diate vicinity of Minneapolis will become the usual national convention if travel restrictions are lifted in time. The English clubs of Minneapolis and St. Paul will be the hosts.

Books

ONE MORE MILESTONE

*Say What You Mean*¹ is the fourth of a series of what its publishers describe as "Inimitable Guides to Correct Speaking and Writing." Its six chapters deal comprehensively and successively with the overuse, underuse, misuse, and abuse of words, and with spelling and punctuation. Any mere listing of the chapter contents, however, does the scope of the book an injustice. It is more appropriately described by its subtitle, *Everyman's Guide to Diction and Grammar*. It is a book designed for the man in the street, "a dictionary," according to the author, "of grammar in which constructive coverage of all kinds of grammatical errors is made through the medium of man-in-the-street expression."

A reviewer who has little confidence in his own rather foggy notions of the linguistic needs of the man in the street hesitates to question the distinguished author's interpretation of those needs. It would not have occurred to me, however, that adequate explanations of such terms as *anacoluthon*, *anadiplosis*, *anaphora*, *anaptyxis*, *aphaeresis*, *apocope*, *aposiopesis*, *asyndetic* and *polysyndetic connection*, *chiasmus*, *diere-sis*, *ecphoneme*, *enallage*, *epanadiplosis*, *epen-thesis*, *hendiadys*, *heterography*, *heteronym*, *heterophasia*, *heterophemy*, *homograph*, *homonym*, *illeism*, *incapsulation*, *litotes*, *sigma-tism*, *syllipsis*, *tmesis*, and *virgule* were either necessary for the man in the street or consistent with the author's intent to avoid "involved and highly formalized terminology."

The high standard of correctness that Opdycke holds up will be familiar to all who have studied his earlier works. In *Say What You Mean* that standard is not lowered. It yields nothing to colloquialism, which

throughout the book the author regards as informality verging on slovenliness. Perhaps that standard receives its clearest expression in the author's warning to his readers to resist the unfortunate acceptance of illogical agreements "even in conversation, however colloquial, in order to prevent disagreement from carrying over into formal writing."

Such a standard towers above the undiscriminating judgments of lexicographers and Opdycke's admirers will note with satisfaction that he insulates his man in the street against such slovenly pronunciation as one is likely to find in, say, Kenyon and Knott's *Pronouncing Dictionary of American English*.

Moreover, on hundreds of constructions, Opdycke's resolution to keep the language a well of English undefiled strengthens him in his resistance to the corrupting influence of the work of such men as Fries, Jespersen, Leonard, Marckwardt, and Perrin. He refuses to be impressed by studies that try to prove that the subjunctive is no longer a vital mood. He is not taken in by arguments that would permit meaning to overrule form in governing subject-verb and pronoun-antecedent agreement. He turns a deaf ear to rationalizations that would allow a pronoun object to masquerade in the nominative case merely because it occupied the subject territory, which it had no business occupying in the first place. And his defense of the *shall-will* distinction will fortify many a wavering teacher against the subversive propaganda that is beginning to make itself heard, even at national conventions of college English teachers.

Yet Opdycke, by his own admission, is no purist. He willingly admits that "little if any distinction is longer made between *oneself* and *one's self*." He accepts "Every man must take his packet with him" as a modern substitute for "Each man must take

¹ John B. Opdycke, *Say What You Mean*. New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1944.

his packet with him" because he recognizes that the nice distinction between these sentences "has now become, it is feared, more or less of a dead letter even in literary usage." Indeed, there are times when one has the impression that in some future work Opdycke's recognition of the evolutionary nature of language may overflow the Introduction and seep into the very body of his text.

JAMES M. MCCRIMMON

UNIVERSITY OF TOLEDO

LIBERAL EDUCATION—REBIRTH?

Although *The Rebirth of Liberal Education* is a little too generous a title for Mr. Millett's book,¹ it is a brief and clear-cut analysis of some of the causes of weaknesses in the humanities and a partial program for their self-improvement.

Although Mr. Millett recognizes the handicaps our society sets to the fields dedicated to "the discrimination, manipulation, and presentation of values," he believes their present low state is due chiefly to their tendency to work in self-contained and over-specialized departments, and especially to the application of "scientific" methods, in large measure due to "the incubus of the old-line graduate school." Chapter ii describes some experiments in breaking down departmental barriers at Bennington, Chicago, Colgate, Princeton, Scripps, Stanford, and other institutions. The descriptions are based on published and for the most part official statements. They might be more fresh and discerning if they reflected the visits Mr. Millett made to these institutions for the Rockefeller Foundation.

Chapter iii discusses numerous experiments in techniques of teaching intended principally to give the student more of a role in his "education": comprehensive examinations, small discussion groups, in-

dividual tutorial work, independent study plans, honors papers. That the teacher is more important than the system is apparent from Mr. Millett's observation of small discussion groups: "I came away with the feeling that the teachers had given vivid and even brilliant personal performances but that the performances of the students—the supporting cast—were negligible because of the star-system that seemed to dominate the production. After all, a discussion group ought to bring out the quality of the students rather than the quality of the professor." The schemes range from complete reliance on examinations at Chicago to their complete absence at Bennington and Sarah Lawrence.

More fundamental innovations are artists in residence, ear-reading, the great books plan, and the return-to-the-text movement, which Mr. Millett calls "perhaps the most promising innovation in contemporary teaching techniques." One may agree with this judgment and still wish that he had shown an awareness of the new and even terrifying sort of pedantry that the study of "the text" is developing in teachers who forget its reader. Some of the analyses of literature, even by the high priests of the movement, seem hardly concerned with any basic "values."

Perhaps the most stimulating chapter is the fourth, "Personnel in the Humanities." It presents an unflattering but reasonably stated description of the members of our profession, their social and intellectual qualities, the deadening effects of specialization and current graduate work. In his valuation of teachers in the humanities according to "mental vigor, breadth of intellectual interests, and freedom from departmental narrowness," Mr. Millett places English departments below history, philosophy, and fine arts, and above only modern language departments. He makes some specific suggestions for the selection and training in graduate schools of teachers "who will not debilitate the humanistic tradition, but will constantly vitalize it."

Chapter vi, "The Future of the Human-

¹ Fred B. Millett, *The Rebirth of Liberal Education*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1945. Pp. 179. \$2.00.

ties," is probably the least satisfactory of the book—but who can satisfy even himself on this topic? The easy use of *value* and *values* which is common to most writers on our ideals seems to be leading to a new obscurantism. It makes it easy for us to assert our superiority and perhaps to beg the question of both our importance and our function. There are values and values, and taking them for granted without realizing the range—in our field from those of naturalists

and Marxists to ecclesiastical humanists—is not very definitive.

But the brevity and the clarity of the book make it important in itself, and its quotations and references make it a review of, or guide to, much that has been written on our major problems. College teachers of English should skim it all and read with thoughtful attention chapters iii and iv.

PORTER G. PERRIN

COLGATE UNIVERSITY

In Brief Review

[Mention under this head does not preclude review elsewhere.]

FOR THE GENERAL READER

Apartment in Athens. By GLENWAY WESTCOTT. Harper. \$2.50.

During the German occupation of Athens, Captain Kalter was billeted in the four-room apartment of a middle-class family. Mr. and Mrs. Helianos, starved in mind and body, assume menial duties with pathetic humility. The little girl, already dulled by privation, grows weak and idiotic. The twelve-year-old boy lusts for vengeance. When personal sorrow and a promotion come to Kalter, for a time he seems almost human—the "good German, the repentant German"—but even in death he strikes out at the despairing Greeks. "Let my death," he prays his commander, "be useful to Germany." The Helianoses might be any family, Greece any occupied country, the captain any German.

The Selected Works of Tom Paine. Edited by HOWARD FAST. Duell, Sloan. \$3.50 (Library ed., \$2.75).

By the author of *Citizen Tom Paine*. Fast says in the Introduction that the prophet of the common man stepped into the land and era of the common man when he, Tom Paine, landed in America. There are running commentaries about Paine's life and the circumstances under which he wrote each of the selections, which are: "Common Sense," "The Crisis Papers," "The Rights of Man," "The Age of Reason," and "Letter to Washington."

Return to the Vineyard. By MARY LOOS and WALTER DURANTY. Doubleday. \$2.50.

Somewhere in Europe thirty-one survivors from a village of more than two hundred, rescued from prison, concentration camps, and forced labor, return to their beloved village only to find complete destruction. The aged, the young, and the children live together in a cave and attempt to rebuild their homes and restore the vineyard. The most dramatic

element of the story is the flaring-up of jealousy, ambition, and those ugly traits to which human beings are susceptible—while at the same time honor and integrity are basic principles. The people individually and collectively rise to better things. Faith is restored. Good.

Winds Blow Gently. By RONALD KIRKBRIDE. Frederick Fell. \$2.50.

The story of a Quaker family who left their Pennsylvania home for plantation life in South Carolina. The time is 1921-31. The story is told by a young son. Of course, as northerners, they come into conflict with the ideas and customs of the Old South. How they preserved their deep integrity and strove for better things for the whole community makes a story which will be a boon to many readers of graft and greed in fiction. In mood reminiscent of *How Green Was My Valley*—but it could be true.

The Broken Pitcher. By NAOMI GILPATRICK. Dial.

A psychological story of love as experienced by four women and two men. The story is told by a college girl who adored her dead father and his memory and returns to her home to find a charming stepfather. Unusual in form and style. Winner of an Avery Hopwood Major Fiction Award.

The Journal of Mary Hervey Russell. By STORM JAMESON. Macmillan. \$2.50.

Mary Hervey Russell purports to be the granddaughter of Storm Jameson's Mary Hervey of *The Lovely Ship* and daughter of Sylvia Russell of *The Captain's Wife*, but her experiences reflect the life of the author. An examination of a sensitive mind, of the impact of life and art in a passing Europe upon an intelligent traveler and keen student of people and events.

Faces in a Dusty Picture. By GERALD KERSH. Whitelsey House. \$2.00.

A war story which preserves the personal quality of each man while the British regiment marches as a unit across what seems an impossible desert on an impossible mission. The attack is made and ends indeterminately. Casualties are high. "An enormous quiet has fallen upon the desert. Under the stars men labor at the broken shells of ruined tanks, while grain by grain the sand rolls down quietly obliterating their tracks, and a few last white ribbons of smoke creep out of the battered giants in the dusk. . . . Today is falling behind into the blank file of yesterday's history." A vivid picture, bitter, compelling, dignified.

Young Bess. By MARGARET IRWIN. Harcourt. \$2.50.

Queen Elizabeth, in this very imaginative and romantic picture of her youth, already shows a capacity for statesmanship in her relation to her stepmother, to Henry VIII, and to the lesser folk about her. In the early chapters her father dominates the scene. A very vivid, readable story of a young girl and what ambition did to her.

Looking for a Bluebird. By JOSEPH WECHSBERG. Houghton. \$2.50.

Joseph Wechsberg left home to see the world, and in time became an orchestra leader on the Red Sea route. The world he saw and of which he writes so wittily is the crazy blues-jazz-nightclub world of the 1920's and 1930's. Of course, he hands a wallop to the stuffed shirt. Readers of the *New Yorker* will recognize his style.

Three Who Loved. By EDITA MORRIS. Viking. \$2.00.

By the author of *My Darling from the Lions*, this volume is distinguished by the lush use of adjectives, adverbs, similes, and metaphors—and yet it is beautifully written. Three long stories, with love as the central theme, which have a haunting quality.

Poor Child. By ANNE PARRISH. Harper. \$2.00.

Martin Doyle, tough twelve-year-old orphan, a very real boy, is taken from the city streets by a beautiful benefactress for whose love he fights a desperate battle. A sensitive story of good and evil forces.

The Bedside Tales. By PETER ARNO. Penn. \$1.98.

Stories, sketches, and humor by prominent authors: Hemingway, Steinbeck, Benchley, etc. Good.

A Treasury of Russian Literature. Edited by BERNARD GUILBERT GUERNEY. Blakiston.

Eight centuries of great writing; over one thousand pages. Full-length novels by Turgenev and Dostoevski; full-length plays by Chekov, Gorki, and Gogol; novelettes by Tolstoi and others; miscellaneous pieces representing the writers who have helped to create a literature which illuminates the spirit of the Russian people. A magnificent and significant volume.

The Lambs. By KATHARINE ANTHONY. Knopf. \$3.50.

A biographical study of Mary and Charles, and a picture of their circle. The emphasis is on the influence of Mary upon Charles's work, on Mary's insanity, and on the parts their friends played in both the private and the literary life of Charles. Quite readable. Photographs.

Panorama of Rural England. Edited by W. J. TURNER. Hastings. \$5.00.

Forty-eight color plates, 132 black-and-whites. Introduction by Edmund Blunden. Contents: English Country Houses, by V. Sackville-West; English Gardens, Villages, Cities and Small Towns, Inns, Ports and Harbours, by others. A handsome volume which quite captures the spirit of the England that has been—and may be again.

Solution in Asia. By OWEN LATTIMORE. Atlantic. \$2.00.

Lattimore, political adviser to Chiang Kai-shek, 1941-42, writes bluntly of political chicanery, of myths and dogmas concerning Asia which have been taught us by men quite ignorant of Asiatic people. He says the Asiatics are more interested in the democratic practices which they see in Russia than in the theories coupled with imperialism which they see in Anglo-Saxon democracies. He warns against American aid to European powers which hope to regain their colonies. "The time has come to give Asiatic policy a top priority in America's relations with the world." A daring book, earnest and convincing. End maps.

Black Boy. By RICHARD WRIGHT. Harper. \$2.50.

The author of *Native Son* has written a controversial story of his boyhood in Mississippi and Memphis. Except for his hatred of the whites it might, as far as privations are concerned, be the story of any poor boy. His life was quite dominated by this hatred. According to his story, his relatives, many of them, held fair jobs and must have lived in some comfort. They had money for travel expenses when the grandmother fell ill. Yet, he says that he was starved, beaten, felt and received no affection. He received an elementary education and learned to read Dreiser. At about sixteen he stole money enough to go to Memphis, and later went to Chicago, where the book ends.

Pioneers of the Ozarks. By LENNIS LEONARD BROADFOOT. Caxton. \$5.00.

Of the many pictures (full pages, 9 × 12) the author says that each was drawn or painted from life—except one old mill. Many of the homes are off the road, to be reached muleback or afoot. The people tell in a few words their own simple life-stories. Their outstanding characteristics are the great ages to which they live and their independence—voiced by nearly everyone. Broadfoot is one of them.

American Chronicle: The Autobiography of Ray Stannard Baker (David Grayson). Scribner. \$3.50.

Baker's first real assignment as a cub newspaper reporter in Chicago in 1892 was to go to Massillon, Ohio, to "see what that queer chap named Coxey was up to." The Pullman strike, Bryan's first campaign, the rise of Theodore Roosevelt, Baker's work on *McClure's Magazine*, and his depiction of political and literary geniuses followed in rapid succession. Then came *Adventures in Contentment* by "David Grayson." Much new material about Baker's association with Woodrow Wilson is included with a fine description of the Peace Conference. This is, indeed, a very special autobiography, wholesome and inspiring.

Wars I Have Seen. By GERTRUDE STEIN. Random House. \$2.50.

Miss Stein describes life in France during the German occupation. (She was there.) She also states her reaction to wars in general and to invaders and collaborators in particular.

The Salinas: The Upside Down River. By Anne B. Fisher. Farrar. \$2.50.

One of the best of the "Rivers-in-America" series. The valley of the Salinas is one of the richest agricultural areas in the world and has an intensely interesting history which is well told here. It was discovered by the Spaniards, then transformed by "the Padre," and finally became a prize for John C. Fremont. Fremont is not quite the hero here that he is in *Immortal Wife*.

Two Billion Acre Farm. By ROBERT WEST HOWARD. Doubleday. \$2.50.

"An informal history of American agriculture told in terms of the men and women who crossed the plains, cleared the wilderness, fed the nation in time of peace and war, fought through the grange and like organizations for the farmer's right place in the economics of a land which gave plenty for the city and little or nothing for the farmer." The account reaches from the Aleuts, the Mound Builders, the Indians, with their primitive methods and the development of corn, to the "Rise of the Brief Case Dynasty," with government planning, the farm co-operative movement, and a back-to-the-land movement. Howard does not favor too much regulation and "city rule" of agriculture.

Green Mansions. By W. H. HUDSON. Random House. \$3.95.

A beautifully illustrated new edition.

Portrait of Shelley. By NEWMAN IVEY WHITE. Knopf. Pp. xxiii + 482. \$4.00.

A short edition of Dr. White's two-volume Shelley published in 1940.

Samuel Johnson. By JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH. Holt. Pp. 599. \$3.75.

A full biography of the Sage of Fleet Street in the light of contemporary knowledge and judgment by an author who is himself a stylist and a wit.

A Conversation with Bryce. By GILBERT MURRAY. Oxford University Press. Pp. 45. \$0.50.

A James Bryce Memorial Lecture, Somerville College, Oxford.

Song Out of Sorrow. By FELIX DOHERTY. Humphries. Pp. 95. \$1.50.

A biographical play on the life of the great Catholic poet, Francis Thompson. Has both dramatic and literary qualities and has had many successful performances in the Little Theaters.

FOR THE TEACHER

The College and Teacher Education. By W. EARL ARMSTRONG, ERNEST V. HOLLIS, and HELEN DAVIS. Prepared for the Commission on Teacher Education. American Council of Education, Washington, D.C. Pp. 311. \$2.50.

Concerns the experience of twenty colleges and universities associated for three years in a nationwide project known as the co-operative study of teacher education. Companion volume to *Teachers for Our Times*, dealing with the corresponding experience of selected systems of public schools. Present volume reports on "an experiment in joint thinking and group action with respect to the preparation and continuous growth in service to teachers—using the term to cover school administrators and supervisors as well as the instructional staff." Subjects discussed include implementation of student personnel programs, work on general education, emphasis on the major field, patterns of teacher education, essentials of teacher education, and integration and the group approach.

America in Fiction. By OTIS W. COAN and RICHARD G. LILLARD. Rev. ed. Stanford University Press. Pp. 162. \$1.75.

An annotated list of novels that interpret aspects of life in the United States. Divided into the following categories: pioneering; farm and village life; industrial America; politics and public institutions; religion; minority ethnic groups. Contains also suggestions for background reading and an index to authors. Its purpose is to "help readers understand their country better through imaginative writings which present specific human beings in realizable situations."

Shakespeare & Jonson. Their Reputations in the Seventeenth Century Compared. By GERALD

EADES BENTLEY. University of Chicago Press. 2 vols. Vol. I, \$2.50; Vol. II, \$6.00. Set of two vols. \$7.50.

Volume I is a "discussion volume," an attempt to understand the regard with which Shakespeare and Ben Jonson were held by their contemporaries and successors in the seventeenth century. It also sets up a standard of validity for the known allusions to the two dramatists. Volume II, an "allusions volume," presents more than eleven hundred newly discovered allusions to Shakespeare and Jonson not found in familiar collections. Bentley shows that Jonson "was considered by his contemporaries the greatest English dramatist and was far more widely honored in his lifetime and eulogized after his death" than was Shakespeare.

Technique Sells the Short-Short. By ROBERT OBERFIRST. Humphries. \$2.00.

The technique of the short-short story discussed by a man who is both an author and a literary agent. Contains analyses of specimen stories from current magazines.

Learning by Exposure to Wrong Forms in Grammar and Spelling. By JOHN TANTON MCINTOSH. Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University. \$1.75.

An experimental study of the effects of correcting wrong forms as a practice method. Reports a classroom experiment controlled to prevent artificiality. Results show that dangers of such exposure have been exaggerated.

Reading in Relation to Experience and Language. Compiled and edited by WILLIAM S. GRAY. "Supplementary Educational Monographs," Vol. VI, No. 58 (December, 1944). University of Chicago. Pp. 226. \$2.50.

Proceedings of the conference on reading held at the University of Chicago in 1944. Contents divided into five parts: the conference theme; experience and reading; language and reading; oral communication and reading; reading in a language-arts program. Problems discussed on three levels; elementary, high school, and junior college.

A Romantic View of Poetry. By JOSEPH WARREN BEACH. University of Minnesota Press. Pp. 133. \$2.00.

Six lectures delivered at Johns Hopkins University on the Percy Turnbull Memorial Foundation.

Positing that poetry is a means of *realizing* our life, Beach attacks the Humanists' purely negative, limiting philosophy. He goes on to discuss poetry as a means of prolonging or repeating significant experience, as a release of emotional tension. He concludes with praise of Shelley, Keats, and less of Byron and Wordsworth for embodying in poetry unresolved—perhaps unresolvable—conflicting phases of experience. Incidentally he re-interprets several of the poems.

FOR THE STUDENT

Shelley: Selected Poems, Essays, and Letters. Selected and edited by ELLSWORTH BARNARD. Odyssey Press. 1944. Pp. lxix+603.

Introduction discusses Shelley as the man, the thinker, and the artist, and includes a selected but full bibliography. Notes aim not only to clarify the meaning, but "to offer an evaluation . . . intended to be suggestive, not dogmatic . . . of Shelley's character, of his thought, and of his craftsmanship." They also "point out certain recurrent thoughts and phrases that reveal the characteristic bent of Shelley's mind" and "attempt to trace the relation between Shelley's writings and his reading."

Learning Our Language. By THOMAS F. DUNN. Planographed. Pp. viii+186.

A handbook by the head of the department of English, Drake University, to give, particularly to the college freshman, an idea of what language is before he starts his grammar study or his composition. Discusses in twenty-five brief chapters various aspects of the symbolic nature of language, the conventions of language, the evolution of our language, and practices in organized writing.

Preface to Writing: A Manual and Drill Book, Ser. B. By HARLAN W. HAMILTON. Rev. ed. Odyssey Press. Pp. 172.

The author, director of freshman English at the University of Akron, in this new edition of his *Manual* provides new exercises to be used alternately with those in the original edition. Expository sections the same in the two series, but exercises contain altogether different material. Purpose of the contents is to describe the basic grammatical patterns of English and to relate these patterns to the student's own sentences.

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